

**Asia Leadership Fellow Program
1996 Program Report**

**INTELLECTUAL CONCERNS AND CRITIQUES
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

International House of Japan
Japan Foundation Asia Center

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Foreword

The Asia Leadership Fellow Program, created jointly by the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center in 1996, is designed to provide selected intellectual leaders of the Asia-Pacific Region an opportunity to spend two to six months in Japan for their own individual research and exchange activities and for a collaborative group work on a common subject pertinent to the region.

The program aims at the promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation, and the creation of a close personal network among such leaders, as well as with their counterparts in Japan, through various occasions for intellectual discourse and dialogue during their stay in Japan. It is hoped that such a working experience will be conducive to developing new norms and value-orientations for the future of the region.

We are pleased to publish this report featuring the first year of this innovative program. We were extremely fortunate to be able to welcome five outstanding intellectuals from Southeast Asian countries, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, for the months of October and November, 1996. All of them (except for Dr. Kasian from Thailand, who unfortunately had to leave the program early due to unexpected illness) fully participated in the two-month program, and some of them extended their stay for further individual research. It was an extremely fruitful year, and we believe the first year fellows successfully set a standard of excellence for the program.

Here, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all the people who made every effort to make this program a success: the Japanese scholars who served as steering/screening committee members, the scholars in Japan who, as resource persons, kindly shared their views with the fellows in the seminars, conferences and retreat; the people in various parts of Japan who helped the fellows get around smoothly and safely; and the many others who worked tirelessly on the program behind the scenes.

We hope and believe that this report will give you a better understanding of the program and of its accomplishments.

March 1998

The International House of Japan
The Japan Foundation Asia Center

Profiles of the 1996 Fellows

Arnold M. Azurin (Philippines)

Research Fellow, University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies

Mr. Azurin graduated from the University of Santo Thomas with a B.A. in philosophy. He is a pioneer in the area of Philippine studies, and is one of the country's most original thinkers on culture and nationhood. His book *Re-inventing The Filipino Sense of Being and Becoming* has been received enthusiastically by scholars and students in and outside the country, and a recent essay won the Palanca Memorial Award, the most respected literary award in the Philippines.

<Research Topic> Updated review/analysis of the Bangsamoro struggle with special focus on its impact on the East Asia Growth Area Economic Blueprint

Ignas Kleden (Indonesia)

Director, The Society for Political and Economy Study

Dr. Kleden is widely known and recognized as one of the most creative and prolific social thinkers in present-day Indonesia. Brought up as a Catholic in Flores, Dr. Ignas is fluent in Indonesian, English and German and reads Latin as well. He conducted his graduate studies in political philosophy and received his doctorate in sociology from the University of Beilefeld, Germany, writing his dissertation on "The Involution of the Involution-thesis: Clifford Geertz's Studies on Indonesia Revisited." He has been an editor/coordinator for social science books and journals for several years, and has translated theological books as well as writing on the socio-cultural problems of Indonesia.

<Research Topic> The concept of culture of the New Order Regime in Indonesia:
Its theoretical assumptions and its political implications

Kwok Kian-Woon (Singapore)

Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

Dr. Kwok graduated from the National University of Singapore and received his M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley. Recent articles include "The Moral Condition of Democratic Society" and "The Problem of Tradition in Contemporary Singapore" as well as writings on Chinese Singaporeans. He is considered to be among the most promising younger academics in his field in Singapore. He is the current President of the Singaporean Heritage Society.

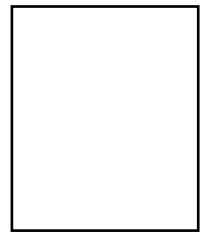
<Research Topic> Modernity, identity, and social memory

Kasian Tejapira (Thailand)

Lecturer, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University

After graduating from Thammasat University, Dr. Kasian received his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from Cornell University. His research attempts to underscore the way cultures have been utilized and appropriated in the complex process of Thai identity construction in a globalized world. As one of the foremost Thai scholars, he has promulgated a sophisticated analysis of Thai cultural politics.

<Research Topic> Consuming Thainess: Global commodities and national identity

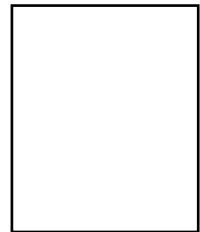


Wan A. Manan (Malaysia)

Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Dr. Wan Manan is well respected in his own field (nutrition) as well as related fields such as public health and education, and has published numerous works. He received his B.A. from Macalester College, Minnesota, and an M.Ed. and Ed.D. from Columbia University in Nutrition and Public Health. As the President of the Malaysian Academic Movement, he leads a pan-Malaysian academic reform movement, and his views and opinions are often sought after by the media throughout Southeast Asia.

<Research Topic> Quality of life in Japan and Malaysia: A comparative study



Asia Leadership Fellow Program 1996: "Development and Culture"

Workshops

Each fellow presented his research topic/interest and a discussion followed.

- October 7 Workshop I
 "Cultural Confluence: The Case of the Philippines" by Mr. Arnold Azurin
 "Representing Globalized Thainess: Semi-Colonial, Hi-Tech, and Wanthong" by Dr. Kasian Tejapira
- October 11 Workshop II
 "Quality of Life" by Dr. Wan Manan
 "Humanization of Modernity" by Dr. Kwok Kian-Woon
- October 14 Workshop III
 "The Concept of Culture of the New Order in Indonesia" by Dr. Ignas Kleden
- October 18 Workshop IV
 Free Discussion on the Common Agenda of Collaborative Research
- October 28 Workshop V
 Free Discussion on the Common Agenda of Collaborative Research
- November 7 Workshop VI
 Free Discussion on the Shimoda Retreat and the Public Symposium

Resource Person Seminars

Invited resource persons made presentations in their own fields, and discussed relevant issues with the fellows.

- October 17 Special Seminar
 "Development from the Collapse of a Culture: The Case of Georgia"
 by Professor Leonard Joy, UNDP
- October 21 Resource Person Seminar I
 "Cultural Nationalism and Nihonjinron" by Professor Kosaku Yoshino, University of Tokyo
- November 5 Resource Person Seminar II
 "The History of Japanese Intellectuals" by Professor Takeshi Ishida, Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo

November 12 Resource Person Seminar III
"Restructuring the Social Sciences" and "An Analysis of
Globalization" by Professor Kinhide Mushakoji, Meiji Gakuin
University

November 13 Resource Person Seminar IV
"A New Value Orientation: An Alternative Evaluation of
Developmentalism" by Professor Surichai Wun'Gaeo,
Chulalongkorn University

Resource Person Seminar V
"Postwar Japan: The Culture of a Society 'In-Between' "
by Professor Tamotsu Aoki, University of Tokyo

November 21 Resource Person Seminar VI
"U.S. Strategic Policy toward Southeast Asia and Japan's Position in
Asia" by Professor Takashi Shiraishi, Kyoto University

Retreat

A three-day retreat outside Tokyo was held November 24–26. The fellows, together with about ten Japanese scholars, engaged in stimulating discussions. The issues discussed include:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Session I | Development and Culture: Some Personal Reflections |
| Session II | Critical Concerns of Southeast Asian Intellectuals: Crisis and
Confluence |
| Session III | Future Collaborative Project |

Public Symposium

A half-day symposium entitled "Intellectual Concerns and Critiques in Southeast Asia" was held on November 29, attended by an audience of about 100 people, where the fellows presented their findings and their future joint projects. Some of the specific topics discussed were as follows:

- development and culture at the expense of human rights?
- the unity of ethnicity and nationhood
- victims of development and culture as sources of resistance
- the humanization of modernity

Other Meetings

The fellows also participated in the following meetings.

- October 18 International Symposium
"Southeast Asia: Global Area Studies for the 21st Century"
<Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University>
- October 25 Special Seminar
"New Nationalism and Ethnic Identity in Southeast Asia:
Japaneseness in the Asian Perspective"
<Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo>
- November 1 Japan–Southeast Asia Forum Workshop
"Globalization and Culture in Southeast Asia Today"
<International House of Japan>
- November 8–9 Symposium: The United Nations System in the 21st Century
"Peace and Security"
<United Nations University>

The 1996 Program: An Introduction

Tatsuya Tanami

Background

The Asia-Pacific region is a vast area where different social institutions, economic systems, cultures, religions, and races coexist. While such rich diversity contributes to the great potential for the future of this region, we cannot overlook the various problems present as well, such as economic disparity, environmental deterioration, and confrontations and conflicts based on race, religion, and cultural background. In order to tackle these problems and to cope with the complexities of rapid modernization and industrialization, Asia will need to have a deeper and broader pool of intellectual leaders and talented people, and it is essential that they develop mechanisms of cooperation based upon mutual understanding and trust. It is imperative also that such mutual understanding and trust be nurtured through dialogues and collaborative activities with proper recognition and respect toward the different cultural backgrounds and value systems of others.

It is obvious that politics alone is incapable of coming to grips with the difficulties the human community faces in the region, and that adjustments beyond the realm of political relations are required for a fundamental restructuring of the present system. The emergence of NGOs and civil society organizations in the region proves that there is a strong need for an alternative power.

In Asia, first-track diplomacy refers to government-to-government relations, exchanges and participation in regional and multilateral dialogue schemes. Leading examples of first-track diplomacy include APEC, ARF and ASEAN, where state matters such as security, the economy, business and international politics are discussed.

Second-track diplomacy refers to the initiatives undertaken by the various research institutes and think-tanks for strategic and international studies. Many of these institutions have close ties with their respective governments, and the issues in which they specialize are again centered around such issues as security, regional and international political economics and other delicate policy-oriented subjects to supplement what first-track diplomacy cannot deal with at the official level.

While the first track and second track promote closer regional ties, the range and scope of the people who participate in the dialogue is rather limited and thin. So-called "political intellectuals" are the major protagonists on the scene, and we see the same casting too often in various fora and meetings. Although there exists a large pool of intellectuals in the region who are active domestically or internationally outside the first- or second-track schemes, there are in fact few opportunities for them to engage in cross-border dialogue and exchange. Enhancement of intellectual dialogue and exchange among these people—the intellectual leaders who are keen in articulation, conceptualization, and participation in societal transformation—is crucial in promoting deeper regional engagement, common understanding and a more robust discourse on issues outside the current first- and second-track dialogue.

Involving such new "public intellectuals" from a variety of different disciplines and perspectives is one way of breathing life and diversity into regional and transnational dialogue. The new network of public intellectuals may be defined as a "third track" in the region which complements on the one hand, and acts as a critical counter-force on the other, to the existing first track and second track. The public intellectuals as defined here are the people who are not only active in analyzing the current situation, generating ideas and envisioning the future, but also active in the actual implementation of their ideas. The "third-track" provides a chance for nations and the entire region to benefit from the input of the best and brightest of the region who, for various reasons, are not currently engaged.

The Asia Leadership Fellow Program, created jointly by the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center in 1996, is designed to provide selected "public intellectuals" of the Asian region an opportunity to spend two to six months in Japan for their own individual research and exchange activities and for a collaborative group work on a common subject pertinent to the region. The program aims at the promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation, and the creation of a close personal "third-track" network among such leaders, as well as with their counterparts in Japan, through various occasions organized for intellectual discourse and dialogue during their stay in Japan.

The first year of the program started with the following five fellows selected from among some twenty candidates who were recommended by the intellectual community in the region: Arnold M. Azurin, Research Fellow, University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies; Ignas Kleden, Director, SPES Foundation, Indonesia; Kwok Kian-Woon, Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore; Kasian Tejapira, Lecturer, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, Thailand; and Wan A. Mannan, Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia. For the 1996 Fellows, the broad theme of "Development and Culture" was set to be worked on together, and during October and November in 1996 the five fellows were all in residence at the International House and participated in weekly workshops, meetings with Japanese resource persons, and weekend conferences. At the end of the two-month group work period, a public forum entitled "Intellectual Concerns and Critiques in Southeast Asia" was organized to report on the collaborative work and to engage in discussion before a general audience.

Summary of the Discourse

I. Initial Presentations

Discussion among the fellows started with a presentation by each fellow on his current research interest.

Arnold Azurin, as a popularizer of ideas and intellectual production in university circles, critically explored an exclusive, official manner of studying Filipino culture and heritage. He argued that in past studies scholars did not pay

attention to the actual dynamics of an ethnic group's interaction with the surrounding groups. The exclusive official studies of ethnic heritage in the Philippines have been influenced too much by the colonial experience, he criticized. Azurin introduced a term, "inter-ethnic confluence," when analyzing remarkable inter-ethnic experiences, and gave an example: There is a local term "Beddeng" that is used in a coastal area of the northern Philippines (Ilocos) meaning a "division," a boundary to distinguish one's culture from others. The term also means a confluence area or a cooperating zone, implying a group's brotherhood ties with neighbors. A similar term, "buddong," is used in a high-land area when creating mutual socio-political ties with neighbors. As such, these examples help us realize the existence of commonalities in the fragmented cultures of the Philippines and ascertain their standpoint in their critique against the official colonial texts.

Although the notion of a national culture generated by eminent scholars, who are led by a coastal, Christian, and Manila-educated mind-set, is dominant over the diversified ethnic cultures of the Philippines, Azurin has been trying to establish a new way of looking at and reorienting Filipino culture and history; an effort to underscore inter-conjunctures of the complex cultural clusters which vary with each tribe and with each region. According to Azurin, it is important to find "inter-regional commonalities" within Filipino culture and to widen the scope of analysis to examine other Asian cultures which share cultural commonalities.

In order to deconstruct the "fantasy" made by official culture and to understand the significance of inter-ethnic confluence, Azurin stressed the effectiveness of a two-way approach: "inward analysis of our cultural heritage," on the one hand, and "outward effort of reviving links to make everyone 'alive' in Asia," on the other.

Kasian Tejapira spoke on "Globalized Thainess: Semi-colonial, Hi-Tech, and Wanthong." He presented a paper on this subject later on which can be found in this volume.

Having a role as a cultural politician, Kasian is obliged to "deconstruct the cultural-political infrastructure of official nationalism" in order to "help the Thai public to be liberated," to save the Thai people "who lack their cultural and economic access and capacity."

Kasian showed three photographs which share a common concern of depicting the relationship between Thainess and un-Thainess, or globalization, through the symbolic use of Thai traditional dancing costumes. The Thai Mara dancing costume in the first picture of "semi-colonial Thailand" represents un-Thainess. It is regarded as a threat in cultural, economic and security terms. The picture conveys a resistance against globalization and a strong desire to preserve Thainess. In the second picture of "Hi-Tech Thainess," an un-Thai element (shiny metal) is incorporated into Thainess (mara headpiece). The shiny metal symbolizes opportunity, power and strength. Combining un-Thainess with Thainess, the picture demonstrates the will of improving technology to meet the requirements of the global market. The message is "let us welcome 'globalization' from the outside because we don't want to remain Thai in the same old way." The third picture of

"Wanthong Thainess" tries to prove the existence of un-Thainess within Thai society. Casting a doubt on the authenticity of its mara headpiece, the picture problematizes Thainess. It presents an alternative model or meaning of Thainess that is neither Thai in a traditional sense nor Western. The picture ultimately demonstrates an underlying desire to become both globalized and Thai simultaneously, despite these two desires being in conflict with each other.

By these examples, Kasian tries to present an ambivalence: while Thai interest is extended beyond the national border (globalized Thainess), the Thais re-emphasize the pristine nature of Thai culture and language. "Imaginary official Thainess" is supposed to provide a force or assurance for the Thai people, although there are a sizable number of people who may be left out. He argues "while monarchy and the Thai language are preserved, the hierarchical structure is simultaneously maintained. In this context, Thainess is maintained at the expense of the 'livelihood, community and culture of the people.' "

Wan Manan stressed in his presentation that there is a strong need to address quality of life, because physical economic development more often than not has neglected human aspects. The quality of life—individual and social living conditions—is measured by both objective and subjective indicators. Wan Manan proposes a comparative study on the quality of life between Japan and Malaysia by measuring such QOL indicators as work and working time, daily life, family and married life, cultural activity, public education, political relationship, racial relationship, deviant behavior, value orientation, material well-being, social security and health services, housing, transportation and communications, and the environment.

Wan Manan also argued about the contemporary role and responsibilities of intellectuals, asking such questions as "Who are the intellectuals?" "Where are they?" and "Do we have an intellectual tradition?" In Southeast Asia, he notes, intellectuals are concentrated in academic institutions (universities), which he termed the "academization of intellectuals." They are disciplined in university circles and tend to forget their true roles; they became "experts and professionals" because professionalization has narrowed their roles and involvement with wider audiences, particularly the public. There has been a serious lack of critical analysis of society itself, apathy is widespread among academic intellectuals, and comfort and the good life has seeped in. We can witness such things as the decline of public discourse, a growth of think tanks, a brain drain from universities, and a rise in corporate culture. These factors have contributed to the retreat of intellectuals and suppressing of a "culture of critical discourse." As future challenges, a consolidation or networking of intellectuals should be formulated and democratic space must be expanded, he urges.

As the President of the Malaysian Academic Movement (MOVE), the future of universities is another subject which concerns Wan Manan. He paid particular attention in his presentation to the erosion of academic freedom and university autonomy. This trend has been reinforced by the encroachment of business interests and greater governmental control in higher education, he said. He also warned of

the threat posed to the democratization of higher education in Southeast Asia, which has shown a positive development in the last decade. While the corporatization and commoditization of universities have been very visible, legal and operational reform has started and promises further action in Malaysia.

Kwok Kian-Woon said "culture will increasingly become more and more important in development, in order to withstand the problems of the 21st century." "Humanization of Modernity" is his major concern here. According to Kwok, this is not exclusively a Western idea but can be a "global project" which is intrinsically human. Holding a fundamental perspective that "human beings are meaning-seeking, language-using, symbol-creating, and art-making," Kwok asserts that any form of development will be impoverished unless it brings out these fundamental aspects of human life. His interests include: 1) culture and the arts in development, 2) social memory and the search for identity, and 3) the role of public intellectuals. Social memory is important because "it gets away from the idea of a singular identity, and it also focuses on the process of selection—repression of people's memory—which is operating all the time." The question of how people can still remember or not remember past events is not only a sociological question but also a moral one.

A theoretical framework demonstrates socio-historical configurations. The present stage is neither in a 'premodern' situation, nor in a 'modern,' nor in a 'postmodern,' but consists of elements of all three ideal categories. In reality, the elements in the three categories are so mixed due to a confusing combination of different elements of tradition, modernity and post-modernity that we have to find a way to seek clarity as to how we respond to the time that we live in.

According to Kwok, the historical specificity and uniqueness of Singapore are characterized by the following factors:

1. Colonial experience and transplantation

Singapore's very existence as a political entity was created by the British colonialism that governed people in the region in the Malay archipelago and those who had been transplanted from other parts of the world. Undoubtedly, Singapore has never had a singular and coherent culture. In this sense Singapore is a cultural orphan.

2. Sudden independence

Singapore's path to independence did not follow any bloody revolution against the colonial master. Its independence was brought about in a short period of time.

3. Radical modernization

One way of characterizing Singapore's modernization is modernization without modernism. The pre-1965 past had to be erased in order to create a new type of society, an independent state.

Shifting from the developmental state to the entrepreneurial state, Singapore has become a vigorous economic actor. There is a need to examine a number of

social and cultural contradictions: state-building and nation-building; meritocracy and materialism; individualism without individuality; communitarianism without community; ethnicity and intercultural understanding; creativity and conformity; and social cohesion and long-term viability.

Cultural and intellectual traditions are underdeveloped in Singapore, and there are cultural and intellectual crises. Thus, Singapore can become more receptive to all the cultures of Southeast Asia and the world; simultaneously, it could rediscover its cultural traditions and resources. This is one of the possible directions that Singapore can take.

Ignas Kleden presented the Indonesian people's struggle in figuring out the concept of culture since the country became independent. Kleden divides the time frame into four parts according to historical period: 1) the period of the 1930s when serious thinking on the nature of culture emerged; 2) the period in which people tried to define modern culture; 3) the period of Soekarno; and 4) the period of Soeharto. By exploring Indonesia's cultural development historically, Kleden described how people have been trying to "make use of culture for different purposes in different historical periods of time," and clarifies "how and why the Indonesian people came to where they are now."

1. The 1930s (the first period)

The first debate, known as "Cultural Polemics," carried out by Indonesian elites between 1935 and 1939, was the most serious and most thoughtful debate on culture and society ever done in Indonesia.

The debate on "Cultural Polemics" comprised three main parts:

1) Debate on the nature of the state, economy and law:

Whether it should be a religious state or a secular state.

Whether it should be a free-market economy or a planned economy.

Whether the basic human rights should be included in the constitution.

2) Debate on the way which could lead to a new culture:

Whether classical culture and traditional local cultures should be regarded as parts of the new culture.

Whether the model for new culture is Western culture or local or traditional cultures.

3) Debate on the nature of national development as an overall national education and training:

Whether the traditional Islamic schools should be taken as a model, or whether one had to take over and to implement the Western model.

2. The Period When Modern Culture Was Defined

At this stage, there was a strong Western influence on Indonesian culture. Indonesia took over the whole education system from Europe including Holland. Advocates of the Western education system, who were graduates of Western high schools or colleges, argued that Islamic traditional schools were unable to equip their students with sufficient knowledge and skills.

The adoption of the Western model was not only discernible in the development of the school system, but was seen in the manner in which young Indonesians defined new arts and modern literature. Balai Pustaka (or 'House of Literature'), founded by the Dutch government, was believed to be the initiator and the promoter of Indonesian modern literature. Modern theaters and modern paintings were also defined as the adoption of Western models. While Islamic or local Indonesian cultures existed, advocates of these cultures were driven to the periphery by those who insisted on adopting the Western model.

3. Soekarno Period

During the Soekarno period, in particular the period of Guided Democracy (1959–65), an anti-Western attitude was developed in accordance with Soekarno's revolutionary ideas. He attempted to generate the threat of a common enemy (colonialism and imperialism) in people's minds and thereby keep them united. Simultaneously, he had to divert political attention outward because of the depressed economic conditions in the country.

While all Western cultural expression, which was considered to weaken revolutionary spirit, was prohibited, KEKRA's (the Institute of People's Art, founded by the Communist Party of Indonesia) people's art was propagated as revolutionary art. Indonesian free artists and intellectuals issued a cultural manifesto in 1963 to reaffirm the freedom of cultural expression.

4. The Soeharto Period—The New Order

The two main programs of the New Order are: 1) elimination of communist ideology, and 2) rehabilitation of the national economy. Political stability is a precondition for a stable government which is expected to promote economic development and to attract foreign investment. It is maintained through limitation of political participation by reducing the number of political parties. Political control is also limited by revoking political opposition through cultural arguments. Harmony, a main feature of Indonesian culture, is important in politics as well. Family-type talks and the acceptance of the Pancasila principles (belief in God, humanitarianism, nationalism, democracy, and socialism) create harmony.

There are ample opportunities for exposure to foreign culture now because the national economy of the New Order is built upon foreign loans and capital. The general attitude in politics is that foreign culture is allowed to enter the country as long as it is not detrimental to the local values which underpin Indonesian democracy.

The argument for the revival of traditional cultures (in the 1930s) is now transposed into a political argument. Instead of having a cultural traditionalism, the Indonesian people are undergoing a political traditionalism which is defended on behalf of cultural parochialism. The significance of local cultures is now officially acknowledged. Efforts at translating local languages into the Indonesian language are promoted to seek more effective political control.

* * * * *

The subjects covered by these five presentations differ and represent the particular situation of each country, but are all interrelated at the same time and reflect the deep concerns of intellectual leaders in the region. **Arnold Azurin** and **Kasian Tejapira** pose questions to the official culture and history created by power holders and urge the need to deconstruct the "fantasy of the Filipino history" or "imaginary official Thainess." The significance of indigenous heritage as a commonality is emphasized by both of them despite the different historical experiences: Thailand as an un-colonized and the Philippines as a colonized country. Both of them are on the side of the ethnically or culturally oppressed peoples in their respective countries and try to reinterpret the official notion of national culture and history.

The rapid pace of economic development and modernization has caused socio-cultural problems in such countries as Malaysia and Singapore. **Wan Manan** picks up the neglected aspects of human life which emerged as a negative result of economic development, while **Kwok Kian-Woon** asserts that Singaporean modernization is a modernization without modernity. Humanization of modernity or humanization of development are the focal points of argument here. **Ignas Kleden** discusses the struggle that the Indonesian people have experienced over the issue of culture. Ignas points out that the people in power try to make use of it for different purposes in different times of history. In order to deal with these issues that people in the region face in common, the role of intellectuals is questioned by all of the fellows. The fellows were engaged in very serious, in-depth, and substantial debate thereafter in the I-House seminar rooms, over breakfast, and over million cups of coffee at the nearby McDonald's.

II. Common Agenda

The free discussion that followed tried to identify a "common agenda" for the fellows to engage in further debate and dialogue. The discussion dealt with diversified subject areas, but eventually narrowed down to the issue of the intellectual. Characteristics and roles of intellectuals in modern Southeast Asia were the focal points of discussion among the fellows to be tackled thereafter.

Questions such as "How does the government make use of intellectuals for its own purpose?" "What is the threat to terrify the role of intellectuals?" "How can we identify different types of intellectuals?" "What is the dynamics of sustaining intellectual life as well as its inter-linkage within the region?" and "How do intellectuals participate in responding to new economic development as well as globalization in the region?" were raised.

There was a shared concern that the intellectuals of the current generation are missing the deep spirit shared by the earlier generation. The case of Japan was discussed at a resource person's seminar inviting Takeshi Ishida, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo, an eminent political scientist and specialist in intellectual history. According to Ishida, Japanese intellectuals played a vital role in the early postwar period and in particular for the 1960 mass demonstration against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. However, in the process of rapid economic growth, the

majority of intellectuals in Japan have lost their critical views, while quite a few intellectuals have engaged in economic policy planning as economists. Economic prosperity created a large middle-class population. However, the active political participation of citizens has not necessarily accelerated. Living in a consumption-oriented society, the Japanese people tend to be apolitical.

Ignas Kleden and **Kwok Kian-Woon** presented short papers for further discussion on the issue of intellectuals. Both of them included future project ideas for the fellows to continue to work on together.

Ignas Kleden divides intellectuals into two categories: 1) literati whose role is to conserve the cultural, intellectual and philosophical legacy of their country and to localize cultural legacy of all kinds in their local context, or to bring the great tradition and erudition of the world into the little tradition of their context, and 2) intelligentsia who are expected to explore new possibilities, new patterns of social and political interaction as well as new ways of looking at things and to incorporate the particularities of traditions or local context into a broader context of world cultures and general learning. He also presents different stages of development of intellectual ideologies: 1) Stage 1: during the period of national awakening, intellectuals played the role of intelligentsia and brought in such ideas as freedom, human dignity, and basic human rights, 2) Stage 2: intellectuals are involved in the planning and implementation of economic development and their role tends to fall back to the old-established traditional role of literati, and 3) Stage 3: attempts of the intellectuals as a counterforce to seek democratic society and to protect equality, justice, quality of life and the environment against the increasing power of the state and the market. Conflict emerges between the role of literati who are expected to conserve the scientific legacy and intellectual heritage, and are more oriented toward the production of knowledge, and the role of intelligentsia who are more inclined to real politics and toward the political use of knowledge. In their relation to society, the academic intellectuals look at their society as a subject for their research, while the public intellectuals regard their society as a subject for their advocacy. The production of empirical and theoretical knowledge by the academics finds its counterpart in the production of new solidarity attempted by public intellectuals.

Kwok Kian-Woon stated that present-era intellectuals are being asked to clarify their own vocation and role, especially in relation to the political and economic conditions in each society. The time has come for a new generation of intellectuals in Asia to engage in a collective self-clarification. There is a crisis of modernity whose full dimensions are not generally understood by the people. Capitalist development has been spearheaded by strong states at the expense of social equity and political participation. The crisis also has cultural, intellectual and spiritual dimensions that have to do with the breakdown of the traditional "universe of meaning" and the reception or rejection of new modes of thinking and doing under conditions of advanced globalization. What has been the response of intellectuals to the human possibilities made available by modernization and the crisis of modernity? Kwok presented a typology of intellectuals and intellectual roles. According to his analysis, there are three types of intellectuals: 1) traditional

intellectuals who are the guardians of tradition and the purveyors of cultural wisdom, 2) technocratic intellectuals who make up the new class of professionals lending their expertise to the tasks of modernization, and 3) public intellectuals who exercise an independent stance in responding critically to the actions and policies of the traditionalist and technocratic intellectuals. This latter group comes into existence with the growth of the middle class and the emergence of the public sphere, a space for public discourse that is not dominated by other groups.

Further discussion led the group to reach such tentative conclusions as follow: In the course of historical transition in society, the roles of intellectuals have become diverse. While intellectuals have been playing the role of conserving traditional knowledge, the newly emerging public intellectuals face such challenges as 1) conceptualization of new ideas and knowledge, 2) articulation of such ideas and knowledge and 3) participation in the work of societal transformation. The diagram (p. 145) demonstrates the interrelated concerns of public intellectuals in relation to the state, market and community.

Follow-up project ideas were also discussed. There are two perspectives for the projects: 1) Intra-SEA, focusing on intra-Southeast Asian understanding of the intellectual situation, and 2) Southeast Asia and Japan, focusing on dialogue with Japanese intellectuals considering the significance of Japanese influence in Southeast Asia, Japan representing an advanced point of modernity. It was agreed that a regionally organized survey exploring commonalities and differences of the intellectual situation in Southeast Asia will be an immediate action-plan, extending the scope to Japan, East Asia and then South Asia in the future.

III. Resource Person Seminars

There were six resource person seminars organized for the fellows during the two-month program at the International House of Japan.

Kosaku Yoshino, Professor, University of Tokyo, in his talk "Cultural Nationalism" defined nationalism as the sentiment among people who constitute a community with distinctive characteristics as well as the function of maintaining and enhancing distinctiveness within an autonomous state. Yoshino argued that state nationalism fails to elicit positive support from large sections of the population because of its ineffectiveness in enhancing national sentiment compared to other social groups: intellectuals, media people, and business people. We can see a market cultural nationalism emerging as a new form of nationalism in contemporary Japan. Talking about *Nihonjinron* (discourse on the Japanese), Yoshino points out that there are three main themes: 1) Japanese patterns of subtle communication, 2) the Japanese group-oriented attitude, and 3) the Japanese uni-racial society. Exaggerated interpretations and explanations of these aspects were made in order to stress the dichotomy between Japanese society and others. In conclusion, he said that national uniqueness can be found not only in Japan but in countries elsewhere. As more and more Japanese work in the world, it is natural that the particular sense of "us" be increasingly recognized. The realization of peculiarities is the first step to being internationalists. Interest in international communication and cultural nationalism

are inseparable aspects of the same process.

Takeshi Ishida, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo, presented a rather pessimistic view on the situation of intellectuals in contemporary Japan, in which the iron triangle—strong interrelationships among the bureaucracy, politicians and business— is vital while community is weak. Japanese intellectuals played a vital role in the early postwar period, especially for the 1960 mass demonstration against the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty. However, in the process of rapid economic growth, the majority of intellectuals in Japan lost their critical views, while quite a few intellectuals engaged in economic policy planning as economists. Economic prosperity created a large middle class population. However, the active political participation of citizens was not necessarily accelerated. Living in a consumption-oriented society, the Japanese people tend to be apolitical.

Kinhide Mushakoji, Professor, Meiji Gakuin University, former Vice Rector of the United Nations University, presented his views on 1) the need of restructuring the social sciences and 2) the present situation of globalization.

He addressed the need of creating a non-Western epistemology. Asians should tell the problems of Asia. Africans should tell the problems of Africa. Problems of development should be analyzed by the victims of it, not by those who profit from it. And the problems of "victims of development" are understood by adding a cultural dimension to the technical analysis, he argued.

Talking about globalization, Mushakoji introduced a theory of exploitation, relations between the top and the diversified sectors. While those who are working in the diversified sectors do not receive the value they have produced, those in the top exploit the value. Intellectuals are in both the dominant (technocrats) and dependent sectors. But those who belong to the insecure dependent sector do not know when they will be pushed into the excluded sector. One problem is the difficulties in linking the dependent sector and the excluded sector. The question is how intellectuals can play a role in creating a bottom-up process. The role of intellectuals is to de-triangularize the situation, not by imposing values from above but by mediating different positions and examining alternatives.

Surichai Wun'Gaeo, Associate Professor, Chulalongkorn University, presented an ideology of developmentalism observed in intellectual discourses. He argued that a linear approach is still dominant that focuses on economic success of a nation-state, viewed along developmental stages or levels. Although the contemporary world is witnessing a transnational tendency in the economy, business and society, and broadening the meaning of development what is viewed in front of our eyes is examined only in terms of the economistic linear analysis without taking the on-going context into consideration. According to him, their taken-for-granted view has been made into an ideology. This developmentalism still prevails because: 1) governmental and social institutions still keep this linear way of thinking in which a one-dimensional approach only judges success or failure in terms of increasingly narrow meaning of economic performance, 2) most of the sponsors, funding sources of intellectual or cultural exchanges have not fundamentally reconsidered this idea, and 3) intellectual and exchange is therefore only limited to "respectables" along the

measurement of the developmentalist values. In conclusion, there is a need to firstly, be aware of the existence of and be critical of such ideology, and, secondly, to eliminate all stereotypes which tend to limit or even obstruct meaningful cultural encounters and understanding of differences, and, thirdly, to realize the need to reform the existing paradigms and modes of cultural and intellectual exchange into a more cross cultural learning through common human concerns, much reflected through the social injustices and human suffering.

Tamotsu Aoki, Professor of Cultural Anthropology, University of Tokyo, argued that postwar Japan has enjoyed a hybrid culture. A particular characteristic of the hybrid Japanese culture is its indiscriminate absorbing of foreign cultures. Once foreign cultures enter Japan, they lose their original form and are assimilated in a pattern of maintaining Japan's "cultural purity." The hybrid Japanese culture, thus, highlights "in-betweenness." It offers a kind of hope to ease divisions and conflicts in the world by fusing various disparate elements for eventually bringing about coexistence.

Takashi Shiraishi, Professor, Kyoto University, argued that the notion of Southeast Asia has been crucial to U.S. foreign policy. However, it may not be as relevant as before. As long as Japan and Southeast Asia are examined as separate entities, there is no way to escape U.S. hegemony. Comparing "Japan and Asia" with "Germany in Europe," it is clear that Japan is not yet in Asia while Germany is already a part of Europe. Japanese do not feel that they are Asians, but the Germans think that they are Europeans. Since the United States understood that Germany is embedded in Europe, it helped reconstruct Germany considering it as not just a single partner but in a German–French alliance. Eventually, this strategy was effective both for guaranteeing the peace and prosperity of Europe, and for confining the Soviet Union. In Asia, the United States came to a different conclusion. Instead of creating a collective security mechanism like NATO, in Asia it created bilateral security mechanisms with Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, etc. Economically, the United States has promoted trilateral mechanisms in Asia (Japan–Southeast Asia–the U.S.). As for the future, Shiraishi stresses, there might be the possibility to look at Japan, Southeast Asia, China and Korea, all of them are embedded in a region. In this sense, it might be useful to look at Asia not in terms of horizontal divisions like East and Southeast Asia, but from a larger perspective, such as a maritime landmass.

IV. Shimoda Retreat Conference

The Shimoda Retreat Conference was organized as an informal gathering of the fellows and Japanese intellectual leaders to exchange their views on common issues pertinent to the region. Presentations by the four fellows preceded the discussion afterwards. The presentations centered around the concept of modernity in the postmodern era. "Modernization without modernity" and "post-traditionalization and re-traditionalization" were the issues raised.

(1) Role of intellectuals in the postmodern period

Participants from Japan responded to the questions raised by the fellows. One participant argued for the importance of symbolic messages in any intellectual

discourse and the need to theorize overlapping elements among the premodern, modern and postmodern stages. Another participant pointed out that the question of "modernity" is one of the common denominators shared by non-Westerners these days. A common concern is how to deal with traditional values, and the role of intellectuals is to de-politicize dominant politicized values in the society. Many questions were raised: "In which direction should intellectuals proceed?" "Who should sacrifice what for whom?" "What should be done?" There was some argument responding to these. The role of local intellectuals is important and the question is how to create networks of them in the postmodern period. The public role of intellectuals will be in contest with politicians and bureaucrats by using both print and electronic media to "speak the truth to expose lies." Intellectuals, therefore, will be running political risks and need to work under a strategy to introduce a counter-force or counter-criticism of concrete deprivations, owning up to social and human costs.

(2) What is Asia?

Takeshi Hamashita, Professor, University of Tokyo Institute of Oriental Culture, presented a new notion of Asia. He argued that the conventional notion of the nation-state tends to ignore the role of the sea and that a reinterpretation of history focusing on the sea as well as coastal areas (maritime history) would introduce a new perspective. It is significant, according to his argument, to consider a maritime perspective in this period of post-nationalism, because intra-sea relations can present intensive relationships—harmonious or competitive—among sea areas that have played historical roles of influencing culture, people and society in the region.

The discussion following the presentation covered a wide range of views. For example, the notion of Asia was created by the West in order to differentiate it from the West according to geographical setting, and a multi-layered interpretation including moral, religious, political and economic aspects is needed to define Asia. Does Japan attach herself to the West, or China? Is Japan trying to detach herself from Asia or entering Asia? Japan's position in Asia was also discussed, viewing Japan as a heterogeneous nation with diversified population, local cultures and languages. Talking about Japanese intellectuals, one Japanese participant remarked that Masao Maruyama, whose name was repeatedly referred to by Southeast Asian participants, was one of the last intellectuals in postwar Japan. Maruyama, according to this participant, criticized the one nation-state myth of Japan, and after his death his work has been deeply recognized and studied again. People in Southeast Asia view Japan favorably these days for its industrial and economic success, and its ability to keep tradition on the one hand and modernize on the other. Thus the love-hate relationship is now shifting to a more positive perspective toward Japan and some view Japan as a buffer against China. However, the question of how to reconcile Japanese culture with militarism or with ultranationalism has not yet been answered properly.

(3) Asian Values

Although the term is developing now as an Asian reaction to the West after

the Cold War, each society may interpret it in a different way. There exists a hesitancy of supporting Asian values due to the vagueness of the term and the difficulty of defining Asia. How to reformulate or invent the term "Asia" by bringing in a modern idea of universalism is the question. Appropriation and monopolization of modern ideas such as democracy have occurred in many places in the world; that sometimes brings about positive effects in society. One participant argues that as long as the term has a positive meaning, we should not deny it, but how we can find it not just as a term but as an actual sense in our real life is important. It is a contestable idea in the political arena. It is important to consider, throwing away all stereotypes, what kind of elements we can put in the term. We need to clarify the expression and nature of the term. From an intellectual point of view, "Asian values" should neither be politicized nor oppose universal values. A form of nationalism or a wider self-centrism is sometimes regarded as Asian values and this is dangerous.

V. Public Forum

In the initial presentations by the fellows to the audience, **Kwok Kian-Woon** again raised the issue of the "humanization of modernity." Using the Singaporean experience of modernization as an example, he argued following three interrelated problematics: First is the economic sphere. Increased competitiveness in the region and the uncertainty in the global capitalist economy are posing questions. Second is the social arena. Although we are against individualism, our system is very much based on meritocracy, relying on the talents and efforts of individuals. This leads to a contradiction with our search for nationhood. If Singapore does not do well economically, will the Singaporeans still be committed to their community? Third, the political sphere. As Southeast Asia's economy develops, middle-class intellectuals are increasing. However, these intellectuals tend to retreat into a private world rather than committing themselves to the country or society. Kwok continues that culture is important because culture is a sphere in which people can develop strength to deal with the human costs and negative consequences of modernization.

Wan Manan spoke about intellectual development in Southeast Asia and Malaysia. He says that intellectuals are people who are not just knowledgeable in their own fields but independent thinkers who continuously emphasize and struggle with the hardships of society. They represent the conscience of their own societies. What we need is an intellectual culture in order to expand the democratic space.

During the national awakening period in Indonesia, the revolution as a whole was led by public intellectuals who did not belong to the bureaucracy, business, or even academia, **Ignas Kleden** asserts. The activities of public intellectuals are characterized as articulating essential things and the redistribution of them.

Arnold Azurin points out that the problem of the intellectual circle in Manila is not an overdependence on foreign intellectuals, but their inability to critique books on the Philippines written by foreigners. It is a tragedy that the Philippines have imposed foreigners' views on their culture, history and people. The Filipino, developed by the old national school of thought, is to be Christian, English speaking,

university educated, and anti-imperialist. This is a definition of pro-regional culture. Azurin argues against this conventional image created by Filipino intellectuals and asserts that ethnicity can be a part of nationality, taking the example of himself as an Ilocano Filipino.

There were many questions and comments from the audience on the above issues as well as such issues as "globalization and local challenges," "the future of human rights," and "sustainable development."

At the end of the Forum, the fellows announced to the audience their future collaborative research project, "Intellectual Cooperation and Exchange for the Betterment of People and Community." The following three action programs are planned:

1. Joint publication

- country reports on how each fellow regards the condition of intellectual development of his own country.

2. Conferences

- "Asian Values and Intellectual Discourse" (First year)
- "Ethno-nationalism, Nationalism and Globalism" (Second year)

3. Book projects based on wider research involving other intellectuals in Southeast Asian countries:

- the intellectual history of respective countries in Southeast Asia
- intellectual advocacy in Southeast Asia
- Asian values and intellectual discourse
- human rights, democracy and the political economy

Conclusion

The summary of the discourse as compiled above only shows a small part of the whole exchange of ideas that took place during the two-month period of collaborative activities. There were many more interactions not recorded officially. In particular, the discussion they had informally among themselves were very meaningful and substantive, helping the fellows to reflect and reorganize their ways of looking at the issues.

The activities of the 1996 Fellows have not ended since there are plans for follow-up conferences and publications yet to be worked out. It is not possible to give any definitive conclusion to the two-months debate among the fellows, the summary of which is presented above. The energy and commitment shown by the fellows were really extraordinary, and there is no doubt that great accomplishments were made. One of the most significant was the creation of a very cohesive network of outstanding intellectual leaders in Southeast Asia who share common concerns, who realize what roles they are expected to play, and who are determined and committed to engage themselves in further communication and collaborative activities.

In his report, **Ignas Kleden** says that "one main objection against Southeast Asian intellectuals is that they are either very much country-bound or Western-oriented. Their knowledge of their neighboring countries used to be very limited and superficial." **Kwok Kian-Woon** states in his paper, "We have tended not to move from a national outlook to a wider and deeper regional outlook through which intellectuals in one country can understand what intellectuals elsewhere are thinking and how they grapple with their situations." The very objective of the program is, borrowing from **Kasian Tejapira's** description, "to provide the fellows with a rare and valuable opportunity and forum to air their domestically developed ideas and arguments before an audience of like-minded international colleagues, to let their views be examined, questioned, challenged, contested and criticized by the latter and see whether or not they could withstand the test and still hold water." In other words, the program aims to provide an opportunity for such intellectuals, who are rather confined in their own compartments, to learn about their neighbors including the Japanese, if they regard the Japanese as their neighbors.

In the evaluation papers of the fellows, a few questions were raised about the basic objectives of the program. One common question was whether the program aims at providing an opportunity for Asian intellectuals to get together and discuss among themselves issues of common concern, or primarily to learn about Japanese society, because of the overwhelming amount of information on Japan they got through the seminars. The answer to this question is obvious. The program objective aims at the former and not the latter. The latter is a byproduct since the program was held in Japan.

Kasian Tejapira, however, points out that the Japanese context had both positive and negative distracting effects. There were some who questioned whether or not the Japanese organizers had any hidden agenda behind initiating a program for Southeast Asian intellectuals in Japan. Some fellows even asked with a certain skepticism why Southeast Asians must gather in Japan supported by Japanese money to discuss issues pertinent to Southeast Asia. The answer of the organizers is rather simple. There is no hidden agenda and the program was generated with the idea that we should not draw a line between Southeast Asia and Japan as we may have done before. Rather we want to regard "Japan in Asia," with the firm belief that issues pertinent to the region are also pertinent to Japan as a close neighbor. In fact there were many commonalities found in the intellectual discourses between Southeast Asian and Japanese intellectual leaders. **Kwok Kian-Woon** called it the "prism" effect, and interactions with Japanese counterparts surely helped the Southeast Asian fellows to think about themselves, too. As Kwok says, "I could sense that the dialogue among those of us from Southeast Asia oftentimes resonated with our Japanese counterparts who were engaged in reflecting on their own situation, especially when we discussed the intellectual situation or specific problems of cultural and social development."

Through the daily interactions the fellows tried to learn from and understand each other's situation. **Wan Manan** describes the process: "It was also a test of our patience in dealing with other people with various idiosyncrasies who

may sometimes surprise us with what they said or did. But that is part of learning and building a bridge of cultural understanding It is also part of creating tolerance among us despite our differences in religious belief, culture, ethnicity and ideology." **Ignas Kleden** recalled questioning the boldness of his Filipino colleague **Arnold Azurin's** remarks, which surprised him and enlightened his understanding of moral and social ambivalence. Azurin commented, "Being under control and even under repression could become beneficial, because one had to be more creative and inventive in maintaining the freedom of expression in manners which were tolerable and effective at the same time. Too much freedom of expression as was the case with the Philippine press could make journalists unwittingly self-complacent."

Experiencing "times when ideas and propositions clashed or were in opposition to each other," the fellows gradually moved into the second stage where they tried to identify a common agenda. The subjects they dealt with were many but, as was stated repeatedly, they are all interrelated. The most significant outcome of the discourse is that they defined their roles as public intellectuals to tackle these issues of common concern. The question was whether or not "intellectuals from Southeast Asia can set up a network for solidarity-building, which can play a role in the advocacy of intellectuals in those countries, both by defending their right to expression, as well as by promoting the freedom of intellectual communication among them," according to Ignas Kleden. To a great extent the program answered this question in the affirmative: as **Ignas Kleden** beautifully puts it, "a meeting among intellectuals . . . does not only produce a better understanding of both one's own situation and that in other countries, but can also establish a new solidarity among intellectuals in the face of their common struggle."

Again, **Ignas Kleden** courageously states in his report, "Intellectuals still have a role to play, for the simple reason that we cannot leave social and political life to the judgement and the treatment of specialists only. Life is too big to be pigeon-holed. The courage to reject compartmentalization with the risk of roaming in an unlimited horizon is a desperate and yet necessary undertaking which an intellectual is always tempted to embark upon, for better or worse."

In their candid evaluations of the program, there were many constructive suggestions to improve the program which the organizers have taken seriously. This first year's program was very experimental in a sense since there was no model to follow or imitate. There were thus achievements as well as limitations. **Kasian Tejapira's** report articulated many of these limitations and gave us very useful suggestions, most of which we tried to take into account for the second year. However, on balance, we feel that the remarkable sense of unity and responsibility of the fellows was sufficient to overcome all the difficulties.

The International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center would like to thank the fellows again for their willingness to participate in this program and their commitment to making the program a meaningful and productive one. As the organizers of the program, we are determined to continue this endeavor and hope that this small step of creating a new wave of public intellectuals in the region will flourish in years to come.

This overview was authored by Tatsuya Tanami, Program Director, International House of Japan. The summary of the discourse was compiled based upon the extraordinary work of Yumiko Suenobu, the rapporteur for the program. The author thanks Ms. Suenobu for her excellent work.

Reports of the Fellows

The reports here were submitted by the fellows after their fellowship program, evaluating and reflecting on their research stay in Japan.

A Lingering Glance

Arnold Molina Azurin

Part I

The pervasive image of homogenized Japanese culture is just that, an image, no more no less, created by the efficient bureaucracy and mass media. The scholar asserting such a supposition before the panel of fellowship and research grantees from Southeast Asia is a youthful professor of the University of Tokyo, author of a book propagating the same blasphemy against the enshrined cultural unity of Japan. The skeptical me, one of the five fellows of the Asia Leadership Fellow Program chosen from Southeast Asian countries to undertake an intensive cultural exchange project, courtesy of the International House of Japan and Japan Foundation Asia Center, is compelled to object: "My own behavior has been 'massaged' since my arrival. I walk more on the left, not on the right [which is the Filipino practice]. I bow more often, and say 'Sumimasen' like most Japanese . . ."

In short, I have been laboring under the belief of having been compelled to adjust to the homogeneous customs and traits of Japanese society. But have I really observed enough to rightfully say "like most Japanese?" Well no. And that's bingo for the Professor's point of view.

Actually this scholarly encounter with the notion of diversified and demystified Japanese culture took place last October. But it's so fresh on my mind; it has spurred me to have a good look at the Japanese cultural domains in the southernmost prefecture of Okinawa and the northernmost tip of Hokkaido. A very expensive and gruelling journey, considering that I was travelling through winter and early spring alone, without the slightest smattering of Nihongo. And domestic travel in Japan is perhaps as costly as going to the remoter regions of Canada or the United Kingdom.

Believe it or not, I was often mistaken for a Japanese—a *Nihonjin*—despite my brown skin, eyes not too aslant and lost-in-the-woods gait. Professor Nick Tiongson, currently teaching in Osaka, thought it might have been on account of the Nikon camera slung perpetually on my shoulder. Or, could it be my first-ever winter wardrobe? Of course, he was kidding. He himself can melt into the Japanese crowd like margarine on a hot slice of bread.

In the course of my travels crisscrossing Japan's landscape, which turned out to be a lecture circuit on Philippine culture and politics, it steadily dawned on me that this country known to have a heavily centralized and imperial history and heritage has a varied cultural orientation from one region to another. In Tokyo I was told for instance that the ordinary Okinawan would consider himself foremost as an Okinawan, and a Japanese as an afterthought.

Truth to tell, while the rest of Japan was shivering to the chill of winter, Okinawa was exuberant to the breeze from the Pacific and the South China Sea. Atop the ruins of Chinen castle, I espied the olden Okinawan sailors' route to the

Philippines, Taiwan, Indochina, Malaysia and Indonesia. In fact, when I gave an informal pep talk before Okinawan writers and journalists, the group gave me a sash as a gift which looked like a Yakan weave from Basilan, a southern province in the Philippines.

At least two museums in Okinawa perpetuate the rancorous view that mainland Japan came to dominate the independent kingdom of Okinawa. The major city, Naha, commemorates yearly the departure of the olden fleet from Okinawa dispatched to pay tribute to China. Hence, it is clear from this particular festival that Okinawa's vaunted "independence" from Tokyo was understandably based on its dependence on China. Thus I urged the Okinawan writers to try the two-sided dialectical tensions in analyzing Okinawa's links with Southeast Asia, China, Tokyo and the military bases of the United States.

In the ancient cultural and political capitals of Osaka, Nara and Kyoto, the Buddhist heritage and Chinese legacy are much cherished. Facing the Korean Peninsula is Japan's Fukuoka Prefecture where the public museum clearly states that the regional culture has derived much from the "great traditions" of China and Korea, particularly in literacy, religion, and pottery.

But the Korean community has always been regarded by the Japanese as a minority culture. And many of these Koreans couldn't care less. The Ainu people in the northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido even comprise less of a "minority." A closer look into the Ainu religious rituals, folklore and physical character and social culture would show affinities with Chinese, Indochinese and even Indonesian animistic traditions.

There's so much of Asia within Japan, but many Japanese would rather stick to their belief that Japan is beamed in the past and at present to the Big Apple and London's Big Ben.

(This section first appeared in the *Philippines Free Press* on June 7, 1997, with several photograph taken by the author.)

Part II

The preceding published retrospect of my zigzag sojourn across Japan (which took half a year if the initial two-month series of conferences and panel discussions conducted in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Shimoda were included) is just a fast-paced journalistic overview. It is deliberately packaged as a photo-and-text essay intended to stimulate the public imagination about the varied scenery across Japan as autumn lapsed into winter and I found myself hopping from one prefecture to another.

My photo documentation bares the usual scenery and outdoor activities that perk up the daily ritual of living among Japanese folk: a house painter gives a whitewash to a simulated chapel that serves as a wedding venue come spring and summer; two young friends await the approach of fowls before clicking their camera at a river scene; a heavy construction equipment scrapes off the remains of a demolished building to give way to a new skyscraper; a man walks his dog across the thick snow in Hokkaido; two teenagers wrapped in their winter clothes try to

befriend the birds in a park by throwing crumbs at the flock; monks in a Buddhist temple excitedly take photos of their visiting relatives; schoolchildren exercise by rushing up and down a park stairway within the ruins of a castle for a couple of hours, to toughen their muscles and bones against the chill while an aging gardener dutifully sweeps away the fallen leaves.

In more desolate spots, such as in graveyards, I have also photographed lonesome candles, cups and fresh bundles of floral offerings. I have also noticed that some stone carvings in shrines and burial grounds are clad in crimson aprons and jackets (to warm them up during snowbound days, perhaps?). And this practice is evidently prevalent whether in urban Tokyo, olden Kyoto, or rustic Niigata and Sapporo. Highly conspicuous during my exploratory research from Okinawa to Hokkaido concerning the cultural landscape is how earnestly people flock to the parks and museums, whether for art displays or ethnological exhibits; like wintering birds, visitors to these museums give vitality to these institutions even as they provide brisk business for artistic souvenirs, book, journals and catalogues available in museums or shrines.

And to reiterate an observation I have made in the photo essay, these museums complement the religious shrines in preserving the prevailing (but oftentimes ignored) ancestral links between the diverse Japanese cultures and Asia, either of the Mainland or the southerly sprawl of islands. The artifacts displayed in Okinawa as well as in far-north Hokkaido embody either the ancient links through trade and migration or intercultural commonality and confluence.

That is precisely why I am making this second and lingering look on an exploratory journey because it has been an intense experience, an eyeopener no less, for me as an anthropological researcher. First, I have been further stimulated to try deepening my initial insights (published in *Reinventing the Filipino Sense of Being and Becoming*) on the pan-Asia cultural transactions from prehistoric epochs, with a boost from the studies done by Professor Takeshi Hamashita, among others. Second, I have been privileged to see concrete evidence of such intercultural affinities not only in the glass-encased cabinets of museums but also in olden shrines and in actual production sites (particularly with respect to the craft of stoneware pottery, a current research interest of mine). In Okinawa, the tunnel-type olden kiln used for baking nonglazed *arayaki* jars is exactly similar to the type used in my hometown, Vigan, in the northern Philippines, along the coast facing China, Taiwan and Okinawa. I had been shown by one of the curators in the prefectural museum of Okinawa some samples of "Luzon jars" which are similar to those traditionally manufactured by Vigan potters.

The curator, however, expressed bewilderment why the display caption described these dark stoneware jars as coming from Luzon although they were made by Chinese potters. So I assured him there is no confusion nor contradiction in the label because the original potters and owners of kilns in northern Luzon descended from Chinese immigrants. In addition, I informed him that the traditional kiln for Okinawa *arayaki* (now used in storing local wine) is very similar to that type used by Vigan potters until today. And I did inform him further that historical records and

archaeological findings have shown that in the late 16th century the chief Japanese ruler had imposed a monopoly in exporting Luzon jars, which were then highly valued by the Japanese for their quality and capacity for storing tea leaves for a long time.

In Fukuoka, a ceramic-store manager and owner of an old kiln told me that it was only in the 17th century when the vitrified clayware or stoneware was introduced in that part of Japan, through the efforts of Hideyoshi who conquered Korea for a while and who invited skilled Korean ceramicists to establish their clayware shops in that prefecture facing Korea. This pioneering period for such pottery in this locality jibes with the era when Japanese merchants of the previous century imported stoneware made in Luzon, most probably in Ilocos, particularly in Vigan. And such an interlink of historical facts and probabilities has inevitably whetted my interest to plan a research project that would revisit that period when sailing ships crisscrossed the trade routes and ports of this maritime zone of Asia to bring jars, beads, textiles, jewelry, indigo, flour, fowls and cattle—and not to exclude certain cultural values and practices—from one country to another.

What would such retrospection lead to? Perhaps to a keener enlightenment regarding our past but long-lived reciprocal ties. And also to a greater appreciation of our intercultural heritage and mutualities. Consequently to acquire a fresh perspective in viewing our current narrow-mindedness or tense insularity resulting from short-term memories and the vagaries of vested interests. Ultimately, as popularization of such perceptions of intercultural bonds leads to a broadening of our minds and hearts to the range of wisdom and compassion, it may thenceforth loosen the ground for malingering bigotry and distrust which underpin the need for genocidal armaments and oppressive mindsets.

The third aspect of my exhilaration while traveling across Japan has been the rare opportunity to give a series of lectures on the political culture in the Philippines. On top of this has been the consoling prospect of meeting my Japanese scholar friends on their own turf, as well as meeting new kindred folks. After having traveled together with the other fellows under this program within the first two months in zestful camaraderie, I subsequently feared the onset of loneliness while going solo flight, aggravated by the fact that I could not speak the local language. Fortunately, the prospect of meeting old friends like Professors Shimizu and Kajiwara (and Nick Tiongson in Osaka) enabled me to endure the intervening distances and solitudes. To my surprise, there were also total strangers who were very kind in showing me the way to the next stopover. Along this rambling itinerary along a variety of transport vehicles, a few co-travelers even talked to me spontaneously in *Nihongo*, presuming I was a *Nihonjin*, probably returning home from a long stint of working overseas.

Significantly though there were a few times when I would let my finger-pointing do the talking in restaurants as I ordered my choice of dishes. Invariably, the amused restaurant manager or personnel would ask about my nationality, and upon being informed that I was a Filipino, he or she would also identify with unexpected alacrity himself or herself as Korean—as if to assure me that we were

after all fellow travelers on the same boat or, perhaps, kindred drifters alongside the strong currents of the culturally and politically homogenized mainstream in Japan. I may be extrapolating here but one thing expressed unmistakably was that such folks were identifying themselves ardently as Korean, without any trace of self-incrimination.

Underlying this impression is the well-known simmering situation of the Koreans and Korean-Japanese as comprising a marginalized ethnic community in Japan that harbors a certain resentment over historical acts of injustice or present discriminatory policies and regulations. But in the course of my perambulations I learned that the city of Osaka has joined one or two other Japanese metropolitan centers in dropping the nationality requirement for government job opportunities. This was understood to be an affirmative action to alleviate the plight of Koreans who have been long-time residents in Japan by removing social and legal barriers to their full participation, if not integration, in the Japanese polity.

For the same reason, another preferential treatment type of jurisprudence was issued by a judge in Hokkaido identifying the Ainu people (for the first time in legal circles, according to the news report) as an indigenous people or aboriginals in Japan. The judge's verdict also awarded rights of ancestral domain to the Ainu litigants on an area developed into a dam by the central government. While I was roving around Nibutani, an Ainu village, I learned from some community leaders that the impressive public museum for Ainu culture was built (or funded?) by the central government as part of the indemnity for the use of the river and delta. The natives had cherished this zone as a traditional fishing ground and the river banks as the site for burial and such other animistic rituals as the spiritual launching of dugout boats. This blend of natural and supernatural cosmology is akin to the belief systems of the farming and fishing folk in the Philippines and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. After a careful observation and scrutiny of the museum artifacts, I was almost certain that it would not be too wild a conjecture to consider the Ainu people as sharing the same zone of origin as the migrating progenitors of the Southeast Asians in prehistoric epochs, from somewhere in the southern steppes of the Asia Mainland. But while the ancestors of the Ainu trekked northward along Mongolia and Siberia until finally crossing over to Sakhalin and the smaller islands, the aboriginal Southeast Asians wended their way to the southern clusters of islands. One may make such a supposition after comparing, though superficially as yet, the traditional life cycle rituals and art motifs of the Ainu and the Southeast Asians or Austronesians. But in physical features, the notion of commonality in progeny and provenance may even be more persuasive (as evidenced by the accompanying photograph of me and the wife of Diet member Kayano Shigeru in front of the private museum that she manages; doesn't she look like my mom, or auntie?)

Professors Hamashita and Yoshino indeed could not have been far off the mark in asserting that Japanese society has more heterogeneity than is depicted in the mass media and bureaucracy (whose ethnocentrism is now being eroded by the Osaka city officials who have cancelled the nationality requirement for jobseekers in government offices, by the judge's decision in Hokkaido granting legal and historical

validity to the Ainu claim to ethnic self-identity and a sort of dominion over their ancestral environment, and most especially by the highly articulate advocates for autonomous rule in Okinawa).

Doubtless it was in Okinawa where the Asian cultural confluence is more evident than in any part of Japan today, and more cherished as well.

This Okinawan self-assertion has been incorporated in social science books and in anthologies of legends and creative literature. This emergent Asia-oriented world view in Okinawa is also reflected in the local businessmen's economic strategy of "deregulation," whereby Okinawa may enjoy free trade arrangements with Taiwan and other nearby countries. According to a local paper, *Weekly Shimpo*, on February 3, 1997, the Okinawa representative in the Diet had initiated moves toward such deregulation, and the national officials appeared to have posed no objections; they gave, however, a word of caution or a precondition: that such trade linkage with Taiwan or Hong Kong might be worth pursuing if China does not raise any objection or resistance to the strategy.

The notion of deregulation among businessmen here has a counterpart concept among the politicized writers in Okinawa, like the poet Ben Takara. When Takara was asked last October by *Newsweek's* Hideko Takayama about his vision of Okinawa's future, the poet said a mouthful: "I think Okinawa should become a special autonomous prefecture of Japan. I understand that the Okinawan government is planning to demand that. Japan may continue to have power regarding foreign policy and defense matters, but the rest would all be left to Okinawa. For example, Okinawa could have an expanded free trade zone or allow Asian tourists to come without visas."

It was Takara himself who led a group of writers and journalists in hosting a welcoming session for me, over local wine and Orion beer (described by the island's television channels as "the beer of Okinawa") along with a pork dish which the poet unfailingly told me to be very similar to a Filipino recipe. After introducing themselves individually in the context of their literary fields and accomplishments, the writers then asked me to talk on how the Filipinos succeeded in booting out the U.S. military bases. So I gave a brief historical account, along with the long-running debate in the press, legislature and the "parliament of the streets" which culminated in the Senate's rejection of a new treaty draft. I didn't forget to cite the timely help in ousting the U.S. armory coming from the sudden eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the periphery of the two military bases.

There were also a few questions raised on the history and prospects of the autonomous Muslim-dominated regions (which subsequently became the theme of my lecture at Hokkaido University). A week after, a news feature appeared in the local newspaper describing the discussion of that lively night, avidly summing up the issues and repartee, and without forgetting to mention that we all enjoyed sharing Okinawa *sake* as well.

Such pleasant moments along this meandering exploration were, of course, deepened by reflection and by my reading of several books on Japanese culture that were my traveling companions, if not my compass in this vast landscape. But as to

the directions of research these books and my personal memories are leading me, that is obviously another long-winded story that can be told in another season of *sake* and *karaoke* songs after the serial panel discussions.

Encounter with Japan: Understanding through Japan

Ignas Kleden

I

My second visit to Japan, with ten years in-between, was made possible by an invitation from the International House of Japan (IHJ) and the Japan Foundation Asia Center in Tokyo. It was an invitation to Southeast Asian scholars and intellectuals to participate in a particular fellowship program, which was conducted for the first time from October 1996 until March 1997. The program, which is called the Asia Leadership Fellow Program, invited five fellows from five Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia.

The good luck which my colleagues and I had at that time was due to the fact that the program was a new venture in building an exchange of intellectual insights among the participants. Being a new venture many things were not yet fixed, and the initiator and coordinator as well as the participants were equally involved in giving shape to it. The participants were allowed and encouraged to propose programs which they thought worth carrying out or lecturers or speakers among Japanese scholars and intellectuals who, in their opinion, would be good to listen to and to discuss with.

Most of the programs were held at the IHJ, Roppongi, Tokyo, where all the participants stayed during the first two months. The six-month period for the fellowship was divided into two terms. The first two months were obligatory both in terms of presence at the IHJ as well as in terms of the schedule of joint programs for all fellows. The last four months could be used by the participants for their individual projects according to the time which they could provide for such projects.

In our case, the second term of the fellowship was fully used only by two colleagues, Mr. Azurin from the Philippines and Dr. Manan from Malaysia. Our Thai colleague, Dr. Kasian, due to his unexpected illness during the first two months, had to leave our joint program earlier. Dr. Kwok, from Singapore, terminated his participation by the end of 1996 owing to his teaching obligations at his university. I left the program by mid-December 1996, partly because of the sudden heart attack of my father which caused him to pass away at the end of the month. However, this was not the whole reason I had to leave the program early, because it was planned since the beginning that my full participation in the fellowship would only last for the first term. My request, which had been approved by the IHJ, to spend the last month of the fellowship in March 1997, could not be carried out as was planned, though I could spend a one-week time during the last month of the fellowship to have a second meeting with my colleagues and with people at the IHJ. I was also able to attend the last meeting, which officially concluded the fellowship at the end of March.

In hindsight I think the program was a very productive cultural experience for me. The program was organized as a meeting point for both intellectuals and

academics from Southeast Asian countries and those from Japan. As far as this goal was concerned, there was ample opportunity which gave an extraordinary exposure to the intellectual and academic life of Japanese society. This was conducted by arranging our meeting with Japanese scholars and intellectuals at the IHJ as well as through our attendance and participation at various seminars, colloquia, and symposia during the first two months. The IHJ, which has always been known for its international ties in Japan, made use of these ties to make us acquainted with other cultural groups or intellectual clubs from Japan, the United States, Britain, and India. The long established contact between IHJ and the UN University at Tokyo enabled our contact with researchers working at the University, who came from all corners of the globe, and brought up so many international problems which I, for one, would have not been aware of, had IHJ not provided the opportunity for such a contact or arranged such a meeting for the fellows.

Needless to say, with such a focus in the program, there were less opportunities during the first two months to meet with other groups in Japanese society, which, I think, were by no means less important or less interesting than Japanese intellectuals and academics. What I now have in mind are groups such as Japanese NGOs, people from Japanese business circles, people from the environmental movement or women's movement, representatives from denominational groups, Japanese politicians and bureaucrats, Japanese professionals, teachers from high schools or primary schools (who I suppose must be able to give some valuable input for the situation of Indonesian teachers), or marginalized groups and alternative groups within Japanese society.

The question is: is the program intended to enable an exchange of intellectual insights between Southeast Asian intellectuals and academics and those from Japan, or rather is it aimed at making use of such an exchange to improve our understanding of those countries whose intellectuals and academics are involved in the fellowship program? Speaking for myself, the intensive and well-organized discussions and debates with Japanese scholars and intellectuals cannot be overly appreciated, but it would be equally interesting to know how the people "in the street" think about their society and whether they are interested in other countries, especially those which can be seen as the neighboring countries of Japan in the South. Of course there is no contradiction between the two goals. As a matter of fact, during the two-month stay at the IHJ my understanding of Japanese society increased and was improved as much as my understanding of the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore through my fellow colleagues.

Such a meeting with intensive discussion can and does help eliminate many prejudices which usually hail from a superficial acquaintance with a country or a group of people. Taking all good effects of tourism into account, I could not help but be made aware of a side-effect resulting from tourism in matters of intellectual and cultural encounters. Coming to a country in a very short time, going to places which are selected by a travel bureau, and talking to people who are prepared to welcome and celebrate the visitors from outside, in such a case the understanding of another country is usually made of a very fleeting impression. One might be

overwhelmed by the exoticness of another country and another culture, while thinking that people living in those other countries are entirely different and cannot be compared to the people from the visitor's own country. If there is something which does not meet the expectation of such visitors, this tends to strengthen their preexisting prejudices. In that case, one tends to take cultural appearances at their face-value, and feels these are verified, because one has seen it on the spot. There is no effort to understand why people behave as they do, which values guide their behavior, or by which world-view they try to establish an orientation for themselves. All these things which are essential to an elementary understanding of cultural affairs are glossed over, because there is not enough time and opportunity to look a little bit deeper into those foreign cultures, and in fact such an understanding is not the most important thing in matters of tourism. In other words, tourism as such is a good thing, but it can turn out to be detrimental if it systematically produces *cultural and intellectual tourism*. By this peculiar term I mean an understanding of other cultures which is strong enough to strengthen one's own prejudices, but not strong enough to correct or to eliminate them.

A program for intellectual exchange has an added value, in that it provides the participants not only with more time to learn about other cultures and other people, but also with more exposure and opportunity to discuss what they see in the country they are visiting. To put it in more general terms, I, for one, tend to believe that the exoticness and the particularities of other cultures come to the fore at first glance and those make one culture so different from the other. However, if one is willing to go deeper, all the particularities tend to fade away, because they are merely different stages where the same plays are performed: the human struggle for happiness and meaning, the way they come to terms with suffering and tragedy, the way they produce or lose their identity, as well as the effort to overcome problems which become part of the order of the day.

Looking at Japan from outside, one is very much impressed by the success of its economy, the expansion of its industry, the stability of its middle class, the high productivity of its labor force, and a work ethos which even surpasses the spirit of capitalism in the Protestant Ethic. However, after spending some time in Japan, looking around and listening to people, all this success story cannot cover up the very strained life of students who are under the constant pressure of high competition, the impact of an increasing number of unproductive and aging people due to the improvement of life-expectancy, the condition of children at home who have to spend their time alone because their parents are struggling for promotion at their work, or the increasing general concern about the younger generation who, born into the wealthy society of Japan, look at material success as something given or natural. These young people therefore ignore the hardship with which the generation of their parents or grandparents have brought the country to its present development and tend to take everything in their society for granted.

The continuous discussion with my fellow colleagues contributed a lot to my view of the problems with which Indonesia is faced. In a comparative perspective many problems which initially seemed trivial to me suddenly became

more serious, or many problems which were apparently so serious are not that serious in comparison to the situation in other countries. The result is that one gets not only a new understanding with a new perspective, but one is involved in a more serious exchange of expectations and analysis.

Being regularly involved in journalistic activities, the question of freedom of expression cannot help but linger in my head. The Indonesian conception of so-called "freedom with responsibility" turned out to give too much opportunity to the people in power to interfere in the day-to-day business of running the national press. The print as well as electronic media in Indonesia are expected to control themselves in news which is supposed to do harm to the national interest. The problem is: who is to define what the national interest should be? In the case of Indonesia the monopoly of interpretation in the hands of the executives makes news reporting very difficult, because there are no clear and objective guidelines in terms of which the reporting can be conducted properly. Everything is usually judged by the power-holders in an *ex post facto* manner. This makes the interpretation of the national interest very much dependent upon the situation and, still worse, upon the whim and favor of those in power who feel injured or affected by the reporting. One cannot orient oneself to objective guidelines formulated in rules and regulations, but rather one has to wait for approval or warning or disagreement after one has taken a journalistic action.

When I discussed this situation with my colleagues while expressing my appreciation of the relatively free press in their countries, my Filipino colleague interrupted with an unexpected comment. He said, one should be able to make the best of one's situation and look at the positive side of it. Being under control and even under repression could become beneficial, because one has to be more creative and inventive in maintaining the freedom of expression in ways which were tolerable and effective at the same time. He added that too much freedom of expression, as was the case with the Filipino press, could make the journalists unwittingly self-complacent. The press in the Philippines, argued Mr. Azurin, was in a situation where the journalists and even the writers suffered from having too much freedom. Though this comment by no means could cancel the need and necessity for fighting for more autonomy and freedom of the press, it did nevertheless enlighten my understanding of the moral and social ambivalence of each situation in terms of what it can bring about. It also gave me more optimism and hope in the face of the situation of freedom of expression in my country.

This example shows clearly that a meeting among intellectuals and scholars of various countries does not only produce a better understanding of both one's own situation and that in other countries, but can also establish a new solidarity among them in the face of their common struggle. One gets a strong feeling of joining a common search for ideals which in fact attract so many people in many other countries. There are some fundamental beliefs—in human dignity, justice, equality before the law, and the right to expression and organization—which one is tempted to discard if one is involved in difficulties in the struggle to make them occur. However, if you listen to your colleagues and they turn out to tell you the same

story, you get a new self-confidence that those beliefs are not only worth striving for but also that the struggle to realize them can make your life worth living.

The same thing happened when I told them that there was a new effort in Indonesia to limit the term of the presidency as a concrete measure of political reform. Again Mr. Azurin reminded me that one had to be very careful with the regulation of the limit of the term for the presidency. He said if it was stipulated in the constitution, as was the case in the Philippines, this might bring a president who wanted to rule longer than the established term to have recourse to martial law and declaring a state of emergency. Marcos put martial law into force because this was the only way to escape regulation by the constitution.

The comment of my Filipino colleague convinced me that an open discussion and an intensive meeting among, say, Asian intellectuals and scholars could result in a productive exchange of political experience. One could be rescued from doing the same blunder which had been committed in other countries, though the different political context of each country might bring different reactions to a given political action. It became clearer for me that power has an inherent tendency everywhere which is quite the same, and therefore the countervailing action to control power had many things in common and ran quite similar risks despite the different particularities of each country.

I learned from my Malaysian colleague that the interethnic question in Malaysia has been tackled with an open procedure through debates in parliament and legal regulation as well as political discussion. The Chinese-Bumiputera problem has always been there, but it is not seen and treated as a political taboo as is the case in Indonesia, but rather as a concrete social problem which should be discussed publicly and reasonably with solutions which can do justice to all parties involved. It is a good lesson for people coming from Indonesia, that a social conflict cannot be solved by means of covering it up. The habit or the tendency to keep people from popular participation in solving a political problem is evidence of no recognition of the political maturity of the citizens to take care of themselves, and therefore one could easily come to the assumption that they can be ruled only through political protection on the one hand and political mobilization from above on the other. Participation, political articulation and self-determination are unwittingly counted out.

Spending some time in Japan, I learned something about the nature and the workings of bureaucracy. Coming from Indonesia, I usually have the idea that bureaucracy is not compatible with modern effectiveness and efficiency. I tend to believe that what the German sociologist Max Weber said and wrote on the rationality of bureaucracy is rather a vision, an ideal type, but not an empirical fact. The speedy and constant increase of the Indonesian bureaucracy is not accompanied by any facilitating in pushing for more economic and political initiatives. This is the case because the separation between the ruling party and the bureaucracy is not very clear in the country. Those who are leading GOLKAR as the ruling party also assume very important positions within the Indonesian bureaucracy.

In Japan I was told that there was not only a clear-cut separation but also a

sort of competition between political parties and the bureaucracy. Those who work within the Japanese bureaucracy are so aware and also confident of their public responsibility that some of them even look at the bureaucracy as something more important than political parties. This is discernible in the recruitment of aspirants and candidates for the bureaucracy, who are usually selected from among the graduates of the most excellent universities. The reason why some Japanese bureaucrats believe that the bureaucracy is more important than political parties, I think, is because they also believe that, unlike political parties who are competitors for governance, the bureaucracy belongs to the state itself. I could sense such a feeling when a Japanese bureaucrat told me that political parties could come and go but the bureaucracy remained and was always there.

I left for Japan with a strong conviction that paternalistic patterns in social interaction or else a too status-conscious cultural attitude and cultural behavior are mental constraints in modern political and economic affairs. However, this conviction became really shaky when I was in Japan. I now think and believe that both paternalistic patterns as well as status-consciousness are quite common and obvious among the Japanese people. The way a junior behaves towards his senior in an office, or an employee towards his or her employer, shows clearly status-consciousness and a cultural leaning towards a patron-client relationship. And yet, the proposition that such attitudes tend to become a cultural constraint in political and economic interactions is proved wrong. In economic and business affairs the Japanese are more efficient and effective in comparison to what I witness not only in my home country but also in other industrialized countries. In politics, such cultural attitudes turn out not to hinder political control or even the right to expression and self-determination, as was discernible in the latest debate on the American bases in Okinawa. In this case the Prime Minister had to listen to the demand of the residents of the island, though at last they lost the case. Respect for status and the deep-seated feelings of a patron-client relationship do not necessarily result in awkward political participation or indolent economic behavior.

The experience brings me back to an old sociological question: how to relate the value system and the concrete form of social interaction? Can one predict how people act and interact simply by looking at values and norms, in terms of which they are supposed to orient themselves? My experience in Japan has made me more concerned with this question because a similar cultural pattern can result in different patterns of behavior. Why does a paternalistic attitude in Indonesia become a mental constraint in economic and political behavior, whereas in Japan it can be very productive? Why is a status-conscious attitude in Japan instrumental to the realization of a productive relationship, whereas in Indonesia it makes people more interested in assuming a high status than achieving a high performance in their work?

Obviously, one has to figure out the many intervening variables which obtain between the value system, on the one hand, and the actual behavior on the other. One explanation might be that what results from the value system depends very much on the social structure in which it is supposed to apply. In that case I

think it must be of great importance to study the social structure of Japanese society, which makes it different from Western industrialized countries in its value system and yet very similar to their economic and political performance. It is also equally significant to look into the social dynamics which makes Japan quite different in its economic and political achievements from Indonesia, though in some basic cultural patterns the two countries show some obvious similarities and commonalities. My own personal question is: why is Japan very Asian in its cultural appearance and very Western in its performance? How can a country take over the spirit of capitalism without taking over the concomitant cultural patterns of Western countries which have brought capitalism into its present development?

II

"Culture and Development" as the general theme of the program is broad enough to be carried out for many years to come. On the other hand, it is also specific enough to generate subjects which can become the topics of seminars or questions for research. As far as my experience in Indonesia is concerned, "culture and development" becomes quite an actual issue, because culture is usually seen and treated as something outside or even opposed to development, whereas by development one means by and large economic development. In that sense, Indonesian anthropologists such as Koentjaraningrat talked and wrote time and again about the mental and cultural constraints of development. On the other hand a public intellectual such as Soedjatmoko consistently looked at development as a fundamental cultural change. The latter opinion entails two consequences. First, it refers to the cultural conditions which should be created in order to enable economic development proper. Second, it also points to the impact of economic development on the material base of culture in particular and on the patterns of social behavior and value orientation in general.

After 25 years of economic development in Indonesia, and after completing the so-called first period of long-term national development, I, for one, tend to believe that the problem for Indonesia is no longer one between economic development and culture, but rather the problem of *culture in economic development*. The general question is whether all the achievements in economic development and economic growth result in a condition which better enables and facilitates basic human values. By human values I mean a double ideal. First, it means all values which are intrinsically inherent in human nature. Second, it implies all values which have or produce a humanizing force and lead to the humanizing process.

If one listens to what the president of the Republic of Indonesia reports in advance of the celebration of Independence Day on August 17 every year, one cannot help but be overwhelmed by very impressive figures. Let me quote some figures from the presidential speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of national independence on the 16th of August 1995. The speech compared the economic situation at the beginning and the end of the first 25-year period of national development.

In 1969 per capita income in Indonesia was no more than \$70. After 25

years the per capita income became \$920. The average growth rate during the fifth REPELITA (Five-Year Development Plan) was 8.3 percent; in 1994 it went down to 7.3 percent. The target growth rate for the last year of the sixth REPELITA was 6.2 percent.

The economic growth was evidently supported by economic stability. The inflation rate between 1961 and 1966 was 250 percent, with its worst condition in 1966, when the inflation rate went up to 650 percent. Between the 1980s and 1990s it was kept below 10 percent.

Along with economic growth, industrialization was simultaneously enhanced in order to absorb the increasing labor force, which could not be absorbed by agriculture any longer. In 1994 industry increased to 23.9 percent while agriculture decreased to 17.4 percent, much sooner than was targeted in the national plan. According to the initial plan, in 1998 (the last year of the sixth REPELITA) industry was expected to increase to 24.1 percent and agriculture was planned to decrease to 17.6 percent.

The problem of poverty was also gradually overcome. In 1970, sixty of every hundred people were poor. In 1993 the proportion became 14 to 100. The absolute number of poor people in that year was 26 million. Besides that, the average consumption of energy per capita per day was significantly improved. In the mid-1940s the average consumption of energy per day was 1,880 kilocalories. In 1994 it went up to 2,933 kilocalories per capita per day.

General education and schooling were also reported to be improved. In the period after independence the illiteracy rate on the island of Java was about 70 percent. In 1990 the number of illiterate people decreased to 16 percent. The same can be said of women's participation in the labor force. In 1980 women's participation was 33 percent and it went up in 1990 to 39 percent.

Given the above figures an observer of Indonesian politics cannot help but have a lot of critical questions. Of course one is very much impressed by the increasing participation of women in the labor force. However, women activists in Jakarta, for example, keep reporting every month on the sexual harassment and abuse which take place every day in offices, factories, or other working places.

The number of poor people is supposed to be decreasing significantly, but the story of those who are deprived of their lands and houses for the sake of new buildings and new roads is still part of the order of the day. Still worse, they often cannot receive a just compensation for the land and house they have to give up. The officials usually feel justified to argue that what they are doing is for the public good, and therefore individual interests should be sacrificed for the national cause.

The case of illiterate people is definitely more paradoxical. The number of the illiterate has been decreasing, but this is not reflected in an increasing number of books being published. Let me take an example which I happen to know. The biggest publishing house in Indonesia, Gramedia in Jakarta, does its best to publish every year about 2,000 titles, which comprise both fiction and non-fiction. Except for some titles which become best-sellers, the average copies of each printing are no more than 3,000. The publisher is satisfied if the 3,000 copies are sold out in one year

among the population of 2 billion. In comparison to other neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is no doubt the least developed country as far as a reading habit is concerned.

The quality of general education and schooling is far from excellent. After six years of learning the English language at secondary and high school, Indonesian students do not have enough command to read English-language books, to write a simple letter in English, or to engage in a simple English conversation. Also the use of the Indonesian language is much less than satisfactory. This is due to no clear standardization, while most of the people who learn Indonesian as their second language (the first is their mother tongue) take over the grammatical patterns of their local languages and apply them to the Indonesian language. Besides, a political parlance full of slogans and jargons becomes a constant influence which is superimposed on the minds of people by the print and electronic media.

In the matter of language, one can safely say that in the present situation in Indonesia it is not poets, novelists, or creative writers who make and create the language but government officials and bureaucrats. The bureaucratization of language results in the bureaucratization of mind. One is not trained to think logically and reasonably, because the self-imposed censorship is so powerful that it makes people think in terms of what is acceptable or not, proper or improper, according to the tacit standards which are dependent upon the whim and favor of the powers-that-be.

What I am trying to illustrate is that there is not necessarily any positive correlation between what a nation achieves physically, technically and economically and what it gains culturally, intellectually and mentally. More than that, it can be the case that the relation is a negative one. This means that the building of new schools and the printing of more textbooks can go along with a decrease in critical attitude and lessening of intellectual curiosity. Or else, the building of new churches, mosques and places for religious services or the printing and distribution of more holy books can go hand in hand with the weakening of religious morality, the diminishing of concern for marginalized people, and an increase of corruption within the bureaucracy.

This is the case, I think, because there is a misperception of culture, whereby all cultural values are identified with material goods. This is not totally wrong because to a certain extent values are also realized in material goods. No artist can claim his or her talents if he or she never produces a good painting, or never performs a good dance. However, the relationship between cultural goods and cultural values is basically symbolic in nature. This means cultural values are realized in material products or physical behavior, but material goods and physical behavior are not necessarily equal or even connected with cultural values. The reason is that the latter can be an expression of the first but can become also a concealment of the first. Cultural values are always symbolic in that they can be made present and revealed in their representation but they can elude their representation which then conceals the absence of those values.

The Indonesian government will eagerly refer to the increasing number of

schools all over the country as evidence of the official attention given to this sector. However, official attention does not necessarily imply an understanding which is professionally correct, let alone real progress in national education. One reason is related to the nature of a pragmatic approach to cultural affairs. The strength of a pragmatic approach is its capacity to provide us with operational criteria for action as well as empirical criteria for evaluation. The weakness of this approach, however, lies in its tendency to equate physical and material representation with the cultural values represented. This is to say, the printing and distribution of more handbooks for students and school-teachers indicates the increased attention of the government, but whether it necessarily increases the learning capability of students and encourages the eagerness for certain subjects is still questionable. The reason is that it still depends on how the subject matter is methodically presented in the books, to what extent the subject matter presented relates to the actual environment of the students, and whether the teachers have enough time and attention to carry out an interesting instruction on the subject matter.

Speaking of Indonesian primary, secondary and high schools, I am of the opinion that most of the handbooks do not meet expectations satisfactorily. Those books contain materials to be drilled and learned by heart, and most of the questions are given in multiple choice form. In turn this method of questioning does not provide the students with an opportunity to think of the reason for their answer, but forces them instead to merely guess at a possible answer given in the check-list. Needless to say, this multiple choice system might be helpful in some cases, but it obviously does not work in others. How can one be convinced that students can learn good English simply by guessing at a possible answer? How can they be provided with the ability to formulate their thoughts in a short essay if they are never trained to do so?

The same can be said of other sectors. A current issue under heated debate is the plan of the Indonesian government to build a nuclear plant somewhere on the island of Java. Much public reaction seems to oppose such a plan. The objection is not due to a lack of trust in the technical expertise of Indonesian engineers but rather to the aspect of social ethos and social discipline. The question is: how can one believe that Indonesia is able to dispose of nuclear waste correctly when it has not yet proven that the Indonesian state and society are able to dispose of paper and plastic as well as can waste effectively enough?

Another objection relates to the question of error elimination in technology. It goes without saying that the margin of error in technology is tolerable in reverse ratio to the level of technology: the lower the technology, the larger the margin; the higher the technology, the narrower the margin of error. In nuclear technology the margin of error must be reduced to near-zero. Error, however, is not only due to a lack of know-how or expertise, but in many cases it is due to a lack of discipline, concentration and sense of responsibility. Expertise is a matter of technological education and science, but discipline and responsibility are a matter of social ethos and belong therefore to cultural affairs. With regard to nuclear technology, many observers in the country do not believe that the social ethos of the Indonesian people

is developed enough to support such a high-risk technology as a nuclear plant. Social discipline and social responsibility are discernible in the transportation system, in the manner people treat such public utilities as telephone boxes, or else in the way people stand in line to buy tickets for a train or airplane. If this social discipline is still obviously lacking, how can one be confident that suddenly the Indonesian experts will be so disciplined in running a nuclear plant? Where will they find the discipline? Who is to control them?

This is all the more urgent because in matters of high technology the experts are not accessible to social control anymore, since those who are able to carry out social control of high technology are people who are well trained enough in that field with specialized technical know-how. This is totally different from social control in politics, where the only prerequisite is political awareness and the political concern of the citizens. In that sense, control of high technology is for the time being more dependent upon the social ethos of the engineers rather than on the public control of the citizens.

What I am trying to illustrate is that whatever infrastructure is built and whatever physical and technological equipment is provided, all this achievement does only very little for the improvement of human life if it lacks the supporting mentality to give a cultural underpinning to the whole achievement.

The pragmatic assumption that economic growth will automatically bring wealth to the whole nation is not proven in the Indonesian case, because the old belief in the trickle-down effect of economic growth is not verified. In the same vein, the pragmatic assumption that technological development will necessarily bring about corresponding changes in social behavior and mental orientation is not validated. The use of mobile phones among many people in Jakarta does not result in a more punctual attitude, just like the widespread use of personal computers and laptops among Indonesians does not result in a more prolific production of books or scientific publication. This is not difficult to explain because the presence of technological goods is only the *necessary condition* for change, but it is by no means the *sufficient condition* for such change. Social change or cultural change is the end-result of a dialectic between material circumstances and mental disposition. If the mental disposition remains unchanged, and even resistant to changing circumstances, nothing new will happen.

In that connection, if IHJ wants to retain the theme "Culture and Development" for the next years of its fellowship program, I would like to suggest breaking down the theme into related sub-themes, each of which could be the focus of a year of the fellowship program. As described above, my own interest lies in the lack of culture in development. However, there are many related sub-themes which might be equally interesting.

III

The fellowship program has been designed as an exchange program and is aimed at providing the participants with ample opportunity for such an exchange. However, learning about other outlooks is one thing, whereas learning about why

people think differently is another. Being in Japan for two months while getting involved in intensive discussions and meetings with various people gave me more understanding than reading some volumes on Japan. This is because one has the opportunity to test one's understanding on the spot, both by means of talking to the people in face-to-face communication and by means of direct observation of how people behave and think.

In that connection, I would suggest that the program could be carried out not only in Tokyo, but alternately in places in East Asia or Southeast Asia. The benefit of changing the place of meeting is that all the participants would have the opportunity of living in other countries and meeting and talking to the people there. After some years of the fellowship program in different countries the IHJ in Tokyo would have enough material for comparison, which could be distributed and disseminated among all the participants who have finished their program as well as among the new participants who are about to start their fellowships. The comparison might give some light not only on different experiences from different places, but also on why different places and different people have a different outlook on the same matter.

Speaking from my own experience, this method was once applied in the so-called UN-University program in cooperation with academics from several East and Southeast Asian countries. Those involved came from Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia. The program went on from 1982 to 1986. Every year the participants came together in one country bringing their country-report on four clusters of themes, namely on the state and political economy, people's movement, religion and culture. I took part in the yearly meetings respectively in Salatiga (Indonesia), Penang (Malaysia), and Hayday (Thailand). In the last year a member of each group was assigned to write a regional synthesis on each cluster. I still remember that it took me quite a long time to synthesize country-reports from so many countries of four years of work. The experience of meeting other people in other countries was really stimulating and exciting as well. The only difference with the IHJ program is that the people who met every year at that time were the same participants.

I think the same thing could be done in the ALFP fellowship program. After three or four years, the fellows of the next year can be assigned to write a synthesis on each cluster of themes based on their own perceptions and experiences, or on what they think can be done in a better way.

Another proposal is that the IHJ could coordinate a newsletter as a means of communication among old and new participants, in order to set up a network of ALFP fellows. Such a newsletter can play an important role as a cross-country media which brings up cross-country opinions and outlooks. One main objection against Southeast Asian intellectuals is that they are either very much country-bound or Western-oriented. Their knowledge of their neighboring countries used to be very limited and superficial. In the case of the UN-University program which I described above, there was a quite regular publication based in Manila, entitled *New Asian Vision*, in which all the country reports were published. It is too bad that with the

end of the program the publication also terminated. I can imagine that such a newsletter can even survive if the fellowship program for one reason or another is terminated.

The fellowship program is aimed mainly at an exchange of opinions and outlooks. However, understanding is only the beginning and not the end. Better understanding, elimination of prejudices, and increasing capability for compassion can and perhaps should be developed into a base for a new solidarity. The question is: can intellectuals from Southeast and East Asia set up a network for solidarity-building which can play a role in the advocacy of intellectuals in those countries, both by defending their right to expression, as well as by promoting the freedom of intellectual communication among them?

In the case of Indonesia, the ban on books written by people who are allegedly opposed to the government is still part of the order of the day. In that case the voice of fellow intellectuals from other neighboring countries will help exert more pressure on the national government to review this policy because not only does it not promote intellectual life in general, but it obviously does injustice to the intellectual property rights of creative authors. Many limitations, for example in the case of the national press of Indonesia, are still defended on the basis of non-intervention in domestic affairs. This argument is also often utilized in the case of human rights violations. A network of intellectuals of Southeast and East Asian countries, I believe, can push towards a breakthrough whereby the argument of non-intervention in fundamental cases can be made questionable. What I now have in mind is a center for intellectual property rights, or a center for freedom of expression, in which intellectuals from Southeast and East Asian countries can work together and fight together for whatever purposes they think important. So far such a center has been established for cultural cooperation, but no center has been set up for the defense of common rights and advocacy against violation of those rights.

The transition from common understanding to solidarity-building is a practical answer to the theoretical question regarding the role of intellectuals. Solidarity-building and common struggle can be a crystallization of the intellectual role and the political role of intellectuals. Are intellectuals merely responsible for the production of ideas, or are they also responsible for the working of those ideas? To some extent, this question sounds rhetorical, because nobody is in a position to control the working of his or her ideas. The unintended results of ideas is a sociological fact. However, one can contribute to make one's ideas not only understandable and acceptable, but also workable.

The identity and the role of the intellectual, it seems to me, will still be a subject of debate in years to come. Who are they? What role are they to play? Must they be necessarily scholars or scientists? How do they relate to politics? Those are questions which will haunt intellectuals wherever they are. For analytical purposes I think one can differentiate some different roles which intellectuals are to play, particularly in their relation to knowledge in general and to scientific knowledge in particular. Can one differentiate the role of intellectuals from that of scholars and ideologues?

According to my understanding, scholars or scientists are people who are responsible for the production, evaluation, reproduction and progress of scientific knowledge. It is their job to make the knowledge they have produced accessible and accountable to the scientific community. They are to give a sort of guarantee that the knowledge used by people in the society is true knowledge which has been validated by a scientific test or by an academic examination, this being done by means of their theoretical and methodological apparatuses. The recognition given to them is provided not by the society, but rather by their peers, which become the members of an academic community.

Ideologues are people whose concern is not the production of knowledge, but the psycho-political use of it. They are not responsible for the validity of knowledge, but rather they provide existing knowledge with a political relevance and political actuality. They do not aim at the objectivity of knowledge, but at the transformation of knowledge into an instrument of political persuasion, solidarity-building and commitment, by means of transposing knowledge into sentiment and feeling. Ideologues change objective knowledge into subjective belief. The relationship between an ideologue and his followers is never one among peers but rather one between patron and clients or between a leader and followers.

An intellectual, I think, has a place somewhere in-between. He is not theoretically and methodologically rigorous enough to be a scholar, and not political enough to be an ideologue. His main concern is not the progress of knowledge per se but rather the development of knowledge as a possible way towards moral maturity. His responsibility is not an academic or political one in the first place but relates primarily to the perfectibility of human beings. If an ideologue tends to be so confident of his or her ideas, an intellectual tends to examine those ideas critically. If a scholar looks at knowledge with regard to its being verified or proved false, an intellectual treats knowledge as something which is right or wrong. A scholar measures his knowledge against the availability of supporting data. An intellectual measures his knowledge against the norms and values in which he or she believes. A scholar looks at knowledge in terms of its correspondence with reality. An ideologue looks at knowledge in terms of its correspondence with his political vision. An intellectual looks at knowledge in terms of its correspondence with underlying values. Scholar, ideologue, and intellectual can only work with some stock of knowledge at hand, but they give quite different meaning to what they believe they know, and what it could bring to other people.

It goes without saying that the above differentiation is ideal or typological in nature. In reality, many scholars in Southeast Asian countries play the three roles at the same time. It seems to me that in countries where the number of scholars is not yet sufficient those who work within academia are often actively involved as public intellectuals. Also, in countries where official politicians are barred from speaking for the political aspirations of their constituency, both scholars and intellectuals usually take over the job and become informal representatives of various political groups. This is the case in Indonesia, where the position of MP (member of parliament) is not yet so independent and separate from the executive. An MP who

is seen as too critical or too outspoken can be recalled by his party under the pressure of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs.

Besides that, I do believe that intellectuals are now less persons or groups rather than functions. The question is not who are intellectuals but which institutions can assume an intellectual role in a modern society. As long as the intellectual role is still needed, it seems that if one institution is unable to assume that role, it will soon be taken over by other institutions in one way or another. I am thinking of Indonesia. The intervention of the bureaucracy in Indonesian academia has gone so far as to make many institutions of higher learning not free enough to take intellectual initiatives or to engage in intellectual exploration. Of course this is not an ideal situation. However, as far as intellectual life is concerned, this is not the end of intellectual life because the same role is nowadays played also by the Indonesian press and electronic media. If the press and electronic media are put again under control and are rendered unable to play their intellectual role, I am sure this role will be taken over by NGOs or other independent study clubs.

In that sense, the question "Do we have public intellectuals now?" will be replaced by the question "Is the role of public intellectuals still needed in a modern society?" Power politics and the bureaucracy are evidently a risk faced by public intellectuals. However, this is a risk from outside. There is another risk which originates in the internal dynamics of modern sciences as well as in the internal change of the role of scientists.

In the first place, intellectual life is faced with the technicalization of knowledge. Technicians are those whose concern and business are to transform theoretical knowledge into use-value knowledge. For them knowledge is there to be used, utilized, and applied. Practical applicability and the working of knowledge become their primary aim. Epistemological truth and scientific validity can be attributed to the scholars and scientists, whereas the moral rightness of knowledge is left to intellectuals. Technicians use their knowledge pragmatically in order to bring about the expected benefits.

Secondly, intellectual life is also faced with the professionalization of knowledge. Professionals are people whose business is to transpose use-value knowledge into exchange-value knowledge. Medical doctors, lawyers, engineers, psychologists or economists who are working in a bureau of consultation are doing service by means of selling their knowledge to their clients in order to get honoraria or fees in return. There is of course nothing wrong with this. The risk they might be running is that because of their jobs they are oriented primarily to the salability of their knowledge rather than to the use-value of that knowledge, let alone to the validity of that knowledge.

Thirdly, intellectual life is also faced with the technocratization of knowledge. Technocrats are people whose business is to transform their knowledge and expertise into political power. This becomes possible because modern societies become much more complex and complicated so that the ability to rule over them must be supported by technical skills which are owned by experts. The entrance of experts into politics is also unique because they do not need the support of political

legitimacy. Experts are accepted in politics not because they are supported by their political constituencies, but because of their knowledge and skills. There is a sort of self-legitimizing character of expertise and technical know-how. Besides that, the recognition given to them is not provided by society but is a recognition by peers. The technical use of knowledge in the hands of technicians is changed into the political use of it in the hands of technocrats. Furthermore, the exchange of knowledge for economic profit in the hands of professionals is changed into an exchange of knowledge for power in the hands of technocrats. The main difference between ideologues and technocrats is that whereas the first change knowledge into political sentiment, the latter change it into political position.

If we look at the complexity of the role of the knowledge-worker in a modern society as described above, the space for intellectuals in general and public intellectuals in particular becomes much narrower than before. The question is: should intellectuals now compete with other knowledge-workers for a niche for their specific role, or is it possible that they can collaborate with other knowledge-workers, for the sake of both cooperation and control, by means of giving an intellectual underpinning to each role played by the knowledge-workers?

As far as my experience in Indonesia is concerned, I would argue that the role of the intellectual is still badly needed. For one thing, there is still a need for people who can take time and give overall attention to the different sectors in order to get an overview of the development of society. Some generalists among so many specialists are not an anachronistic luxury but rather a basic need. For another, the problem of meaning is always there, whether a society is underdeveloped or developed. The economists and economic planners are concerned with pushing for economic growth. But who is to raise questions about the cost of economic growth and the social aims which can justify such growth? Engineers might be concerned with technological development, but who is to think of the social cost which is to be paid for the use of that technology? There seem to be no specialists who are trained for such a task.

In that case, intellectuals still have a role to play, for the simple reason that we cannot leave social and political life to the judgement of specialists only. Life is too big to be pigeonholed. The courage to reject compartmentalization with the risk of roaming in an unlimited horizon is a desperate and yet necessary undertaking upon which an intellectual is always tempted to embark, for better or for worse.

Report on the Asia Leadership Fellow Program 1996

Kwok Kian-Woon

I. Introduction

Sometime in July 1996 I received a telephone call from Isamu Maruyama of the Program Office of the International House of Japan, informing me that I had been selected as a fellow in what was to be a new program—the Asia Leadership Fellow Program—jointly organized by the I-House and the Japan Foundation. I was not quite prepared for such news. I was both surprised and honored that I was selected, and the program seemed rather unlike the usual sort of academic fellowship that one would come across. The program aimed at bringing together a group of intellectuals (and not just academics) from Southeast Asian countries. There was to be a two-month period of collaborative work and fellows could spend an additional four months in Japan for individual research. Given my work commitments at the National University of Singapore (NUS), I could not be away for six months unless I was on sabbatical leave (and that was nowhere in sight). Mr. Maruyama encouraged me to look into the possibility of participating in at least the two-month (October–November) period, during which all the fellows must be present. I told him that I would consider the matter carefully and see how I could accept the invitation.

Before too long the Program Office sent further details. I was intrigued by the potential breadth and depth of the program and by the background of the other selected fellows. It seemed that I-House was striking out in a new direction with a program whose thrust was bold and format somewhat experimental. The overall theme "Development and Culture" was a broad and open-ended one, but it seemed to intentionally leave room for free exploration of key issues and problems in the region. The emphasis on face-to-face and intensive dialogue made it different from other types of fellowship. Just looking at the write-ups about the other fellows made me think that they were unusual individuals (whom I have more to say about later on). They didn't seem to fit the profile of ivory-tower academics; their work as intellectuals appeared to carry certain profound concerns about the contemporary situation in their societies.

I had already been assigned teaching responsibilities for the new academic year. The first semester ran from mid-July to early November. With the permission of the Department of Sociology at NUS, I sought the help of colleagues to cover the last two weeks of teaching in October and examination duties in November. The University granted me one month of study leave and allowed me to take one month of holiday leave so that I could participate in the collaborative part of the program in Japan. Here I would like to place on record my gratitude to my colleagues, my department and my university for allowing me to participate in the Asia Leadership Fellow Program in October–November 1996. They made it possible for me to undergo a rare and significant intellectual experience, which I shall always treasure.

2. The two-month collaborative research and dialogue

One of the reasons why I was attracted to the program was the list of selected fellows. I recognized three of the five other names. I had met Kasian Tejapira from Thailand at a conference in Cebu in November 1995; he presented an excellent (and rather humorous) paper on the discourses on Thai identity. I had remembered telling him that I was working along comparable lines of analysis in my research on culture and identity in Singapore. I had met Wan Manan from Malaysia at a conference in Penang in January 1995, but we did not have the chance to get to know each other well. I had often heard about Ignas Kleden from a close Singaporean colleague who had contact with Indonesian intellectual circles. Ignas, Kasian, Manan and I had not known the irrepressible Arnold Azurin of the Philippines, but he made himself known to us in due course.

The minds who created the program were taking a calculated risk. Bringing five or six independent intellectuals from different backgrounds together for two months could result in any number of possibilities, including the possibility that individual idiosyncrasies could have stood in the way of any group effort and things could have disintegrated. But that didn't happen for a number of reasons, one of which was perhaps pure luck in that there was some chemistry between the different participants. We took an almost instinctive liking to each other very quickly. Let us be candid: in terms of both ideas and personality, anyone could find some aspects of another individual disagreeable. But there was enough good will, fellow feeling, and common sense of purpose for us to deal with the situation, sometimes by mutual understanding but more often by mutual challenging. I didn't think that any one of us would simply let things be, and we found our own ways of making our thoughts and views known to each other. We knew that there could be no real dialogue without real debate, and that a superficial consensus was not what we were after.

Other than group chemistry, however, the collaborative research and dialogue could be carried out because of the role of the I-House Program Office, its leaders and staff, as *facilitator*. By this I do not simply mean that the organizers provided the necessary infrastructure in terms of basic arrangements and a loose and meaningful series of workshops, seminars, and other meetings. This is important, though. The I-House staff worked tirelessly to make sure that our accommodation, food, travel and medical arrangements were taken care of. This freed our minds and allowed us to concentrate on our intellectual pursuits. The two months were filled with many organized activities; but we also had some time for informal interaction over meals, coffee, and trips to the bookstore.

But more than that, I think there were deeper aspects of the I-House facilitator role that I appreciated. Let me be rather straightforward. As an intellectual, I value—and indeed can function only with—a sense of autonomy. I try to be sensitive about any possibility or way that my autonomy could be compromised or that my intellectual effort would be marshalled into the service of causes of which I am neither cognizant nor supportive. In this case, I was aware of various strands of thinking concerning the "reasianization" of Japan in the 1990s. I had to be clear about what this unusual program, funded by the Japan Foundation

and with I-House playing a key organizing role, meant for Southeast Asian intellectuals. Two things, however, stood out. First, the organizers were committed to "Track III" or people-to-people cooperation and a very special nongovernmental institution was driving the program. Second, this particular organization—I-House—has had a history of promoting intellectual exchange, and not just between American and Japanese scholars; in spite of the postwar turn toward the United States and long before the "reasianization" thesis emerged, I-House's leaders were already in dialogue with Southeast Asian intellectuals, especially from the 1970s.

Indeed, there was something uncanny about all this. I-House's leaders were very much in touch with people like Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand, the late Soedjatmoko of Indonesia, and William Lim of Singapore. Mikio Kato, Executive Director of I-House, also knew scholars and public intellectuals such as Professor Wang Gungwu and Professor Tommy Koh. Now, it turned out that Kasian knew Sulak and saw him as a leading example for younger Thai intellectuals engaged in "cultural politics"; Ignas had a close friendship and a deep intellectual relationship with Soedjatmoko before he died; and I had worked with Willie in the Singapore Heritage Society over the last few years. I also have great admiration for Professor Wang Gungwu's lifework and scholarship and for Professor Tommy Koh's public integrity; although I was not close to them, they were two of my role models. This web of relationships between Japanese and Southeast Asian intellectuals and between different generations of intellectuals in our societies struck me. Something that I had been grappling with in the case of Singapore suddenly crystallized: the significance of public intellectual life, of intellectual tradition and generational continuity and change. And it was in this light and through collective discussion that I thought that a worthwhile collaborative and comparative project would be one that focused on the intellectual situation in contemporary Southeast Asia, raising fundamental questions such as the roles of intellectuals, their concerns, and their critiques. All the Fellows agreed that this was an appropriate starting point, providing a springboard for discussion on a whole range of specific issues.

Thus our discussions during the two months did, I think, have a sense of purpose, direction, and coherence. Each of us brought to the collaboration specific concerns, which grew out of our background; each brought a prior history of grappling with questions and issues, and this enriched the entire process. The group's strength was definitely affected by Kasian's illness, which robbed him of many opportunities to make trouble for the rest of us, robbed us of many instances where his vigorous style of posing fundamental criticisms could have jolted us into a higher plane of discussion. Yet we were fortunate to have the benefit of his interventions before and after his truly painful ordeal.

This is not the place for me to sum up the many important themes that emerged from our discussions. The substance of our discussions has been recorded elsewhere, and we hope to pursue the dialogue further. Let me say, however, that it is rare for Southeast Asian intellectuals to experience close and sustained contact among themselves. Given the graduate training in American and European universities that some of us have undergone, we are quite at home in the intellectual

environment and discourses that are found in such universities and, more generally, in the West. We have had great teachers, we have read the best scholarly works in Western languages, but we do not have as intimate a grasp of the intellectual traditions and discourses in our neighboring countries. And this is also because we tend not to have cultivated a deeper relationship with intellectuals in these countries. Thus the idea of a collaborative dialogue and the long-term building of networks of intellectuals in the region is an idea whose time has come or is long overdue. There have been precious fledgling efforts in the past, especially in the form of academic conferences, regional NGO activities, and informal contacts. But these tend to be sporadic and short-term. To give an example, one would be hard put to find a regional journal or newsletter that puts people in touch with contemporary developments in politics, economics and culture from the standpoints of local intellectuals who make it their vocation to analyze and to speak.

We have tended not to move from a national outlook to a wider and deeper regional outlook through which intellectuals in one country can understand what intellectuals elsewhere are thinking and how they grapple with their situations—and in turn look back at our own situation with fresh perspectives. This is one way of explaining what I have learnt from our collaborative research. Beyond the widening and deepening of my knowledge of other Southeast Asia societies and Japanese society through the eyes and experiences of their intellectuals, I have benefited by the conflict and confluence of different lines of analysis, modes of reasoning, and styles of argument. Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Japan are all different societies; yet there are parallels, comparisons, and affinities amid the contrasts. These can only emerge in the course of genuine dialogue, as in light passing through a prism. And they hit me powerfully, sometimes like a shock of recognition and often in the form of a creative release from my own way of looking at the world, so that some new insight and even inspiration comes into the picture, and the picture is changed, made more multidimensional and more complex.

As much as the dialogue among us was an intensive and productive one, I would also like to comment on the dialogue between our Japanese counterparts and us. Early on, I felt that the program should not be such that our Japanese organizers merely made the opportunity for us to be in dialogue with each other. To put it philosophically, it shouldn't be a case of us being put into a position in which we human subjects become the objects of gaze by others having a special curiosity or interest in our deliberations. And it shouldn't be the case that we look back at the onlookers as the objects that bring us together and make our deliberations possible. In other words, I am critical of a *subject-object* (or *object-subject*) relationship between "the Japanese" and "the Southeast Asians." Rather, my ideal is for people to have a *subject-subject* relationship, that is, not to make the "other" the object of one's gaze but to see, understand, and *engage* each other as flesh-and-blood individuals and not as an artificial representation of something else. If we have the chance to deepen our relationship we discover both our unique individuality and our common humanity. This is the "prism" effect that I have described earlier and not, to put it crudely, the "fishbowl" effect of a subject-object gaze.

In this sense, I am grateful that we have all tried to make the dialogue closer to this ideal throughout the series of workshops, seminars, the Shimoda retreat, the final public symposium, and in informal interaction. I could sense that the dialogue among those of us from Southeast Asia oftentimes resonated with our Japanese counterparts who were engaged in reflecting on their own situation, especially when we discussed the intellectual situation or specific problems of cultural and social development. In other words, we were not merely the objects of attention on the part of Japanese intellectuals and *vice versa*. Rather all of us were coming into a larger dialogue, contributing our individual views and experiences and reflecting back on them through the views and experiences of others.

3. Individual research time

To be sure, I didn't have much individual research time during the two-month collaborative period. The schedule was tight, and the group spent much of the spare time in informal interaction. However, there was a lot on my mind and because the little time that I had was precious to me, I wanted to grapple with some "big" sociological questions that I had confronted in the course of working on a number of research areas. I took the opportunity to organize these ideas and to present them for discussion and criticism at the Shimoda retreat. To give an idea of what I was working on, it may be useful for me to reproduce here the "Typology of Socio-Historical Configurations" that I had developed, encapsulating some of my key concerns and what I learnt through discussions with the other fellows. I shall not attempt to explain the typology in detail. For the purpose of this report, I shall repeat some of the things I said in my presentation at Shimoda.

The typology is a conceptual "map" to help me highlight some contours of the contemporary world and guide my research. There is very little that is original in this map, as often I have followed in the footprints left by other scholars and intellectuals. My concerns are not just theoretical but also empirical and practical. Empirical because I am most immediately concerned about what is happening in my country and among my people, but I also want to draw comparative lessons and insights (as well as points of challenge and inspiration) by learning about the situation in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Japan. And practical because I am concerned with what is at stake (and for whom) in what is happening and with the question of what is to be done and what can or cannot be done to meet the demands of the day.

From the big picture, therefore, I ask questions such as the following: What is the empirical socio-historical configuration found in a particular society? What are the human and social limitations and possibilities of the present, given its characteristic tendencies and tensions? And, as intellectuals, how do we evolve and mount a coherent, vigorous and effective response to the conditions of the present? In spite of differences, what do we share in common and what can we learn from each other? How will a regional network of intellectuals be helpful for our social analysis and civic involvement in each of our home countries?

The typology works as what sociologists call an idealtype schema; that is, it

artificially exaggerates or caricatures certain elements of each socio-historical configuration—Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern. I do not view these configurations as stages making up a causal or sequential model. Rather my view is that the present reality is not traditional, modern, or postmodern; instead, the present can be characterized as *the intertwining of tradition, modernity, and postmodernity*. But the combination of elements, the extent to which they are developed, and the directions in which they are played out are different across the societies. The empirical reality is of course infinitely more complex than what is abstracted in the ideal typology, which is meant to throw into relief the relative presence or absence of elements and to throw up sociological questions about the existing situation.

I put forward two general propositions for discussion:

1. Intellectuals should deal with the combination of elements of tradition, modernity, and postmodernity, rather than work along a single dimension, because these elements and their often double-edged tendencies coalesce and challenge each other. The present is marked by continuities and discontinuities with the past. It is neither possible nor always desirable to abandon tradition as such, especially when elements of traditional (especially religious) universes of meaning are important for many people. Indeed the manipulation and erasure of social memory serves political domination. At the same time, modernity is not simply a set of conditions but also a set of normative ideas and commitments, which may have positive and negative consequences. Similarly, postmodernity as a set of historically unprecedented conditions should be confronted, not necessarily by accepting all the many different claims that come under the rubric postmodernism.

2. The situation in most Asian societies, if not most contemporary societies, can be characterized as a *crisis*. As in the Chinese and Japanese word for "crisis," there are elements of "danger" and "opportunity" which intellectuals should conceptualize and articulate in relation to specific and concrete issues. The complex present requires an equally complex set of intellectual responses. The underdevelopment of intellectual tradition and intellectual community has some serious costs. And when there is a void in public discourse, not least because intellectuals have not defined their public role in the face of contemporary conditions, the void will be filled (almost by default) by the domination of the state and the market (and sometimes by other forces such as religious sectarianism). Given the stakes involved, intellectuals cannot go on privatizing themselves. That there is no sense of crisis may be a sign of just how far and deep the crisis has developed.

Typology of Socio-Historical Configurations: Tendencies and Tensions

	Premodern	Modern	Postmodern
Techno-economic context	agrarian revolution/ feudalism	industrial revolution /capitalism	information revolution /late capitalism
Communications	oral-written tradition	print-broadcast media	electronic media
Temporal-spatial experience	rootedness in time and place (boundedness: firm linkage to particular cultural system)	transcendence of time and place (openness: double capacity of linking and de- linking)	compression of time and space (newer forms of linkage, with emphasis on de-linking and unboundedness)
Social organization	<i>Gemeinschaft</i> / face-to-face relations	<i>Gesellschaft</i> / market-society- nation-state ("imagined community")	"global village" / "virtual community" <i>plus</i> search for new forms of <i>Gemeinschaft</i>
Political organization	aristocracy/ absolutism	democracy/ totalitarianism/ authoritarianism	the renewal of democracy? Or newer forms of control?
Organizing principle	hierarchy: <i>Social</i> integration based on values and norms	equality: <i>system</i> integration based on "amoral" functions of exchange and power	network: combination of <i>social</i> fragmentation <i>and</i> increased <i>system</i> integration
Differentiation of spheres of life	lack of differentiation between socio- cultural, political and economic spheres	differentiation between polity (state), economy (market) and "private" sphere (e.g. family, religion); emergence of autonomous public sphere or civil society	new possibilities for de-institutionalization and creation of autonomous spaces through multiple networks, bypassing official channels
Metanarrative	religion: salvation/ other-worldly concerns	humanism: enlightenment/ emancipation/ progress	pluralism/ anti- foundationalism: "incredulity toward metanarratives"
Nature of social conflict	religious schism based on dogma/ethno- nationalist conflict	class conflict averted by welfare state and nationalist ideology	"politics of recognition" (race ethnicity, gender, etc.)

	Premodern	Modern	Postmodern
(continued)			
Basis of legitimacy	substantive (e.g. tradition, charisma, natural/mythic origins, sanctified in and through customs and rituals)	formal/procedural (e.g. rule of law, electoral representation and formation of consensus)	instrumental mix of substantive and formal bases (e.g. "invention of tradition" and legal/bureaucratic rationalization)
Logic of hegemony/ domination	positivistic ("what is is right")	rationalistic: 1. formal rationality: ("what is legal is right") <i>plus</i> 2. instrumental rationality ("what works is right")	relativistic: emphasis on cultural particularism and national sovereignty [multiculturalism, political correctness, assertion of state sovereignty]
Basis of de-legitimization	critique of traditionalism (critical de-linking of <i>origin</i> and <i>validity</i> of knowledge)	critique of "rationality without reason" (critical re-linking of substantive values and rationality, the ethical and the empirical)	critique of utilitarian and nihilistic relativism/dialectic of deconstruction and reconstruction of tradition and rule of law, etc.
Selfhood and identity	embedded self: embedded in tradition [e.g. rules of deference] and community without room for individuality; fixed, rigid, and 'pure' identity	disembedded self integrated into bureaucracy/market; room for individual achievement and social mobility without sense of community; autonomous/reflexive self; fluid identity	re-embedded self? : new forms of individuality and community, local, regional and global; shifting, multiple (incoherent) identities or multidimensional/hybrid (coherent) identity
Moral agency	obedience to sacred powers/ethic of ultimate ends	conscience and moral reasoning/ethic of responsibility	either relativist tolerance or absolutist intolerance?
Intellectuals and intellectual activities	guardians of heritage, bearers of social memory, developers of traditions, articulators of community ethos	vanguards of modernization, as technocrats/professionals and as critics of domination	deconstructionists: as manipulators in or critics of political/economic uses of symbol systems

4. Plans and prospects for follow-up

I intend to find the time to follow up on many of the themes and arguments that the other fellows and I have developed and bring them into my current and future writings on culture and development. I also hope to do this in tandem with the group's action plan, which includes a joint publication and at least two conferences in the coming years. Given the fact that when we are back in our own countries we will be absorbed in our vocation as academics and intellectuals, these projects need to be pushed and driven with great effort in order to be fully accomplished. We need to be in touch with each other more closely. In this connection, I am grateful that Wan Manan has agreed to spearhead a conference in Malaysia in 1998. The work for our intended book project could proceed in tandem with the run-up to the conference. Perhaps some impetus would also be provided with the building of a larger network of intellectuals both by our own efforts and by the continuation of the Asia Leadership Fellow Program. However, we can't wait for a critical mass to be built up; even little efforts will count for something in the long run. Thus I think our work towards the 1998 Malaysia conference will help us pick up the momentum and perhaps involve the 1997 fellows and other intellectuals. Something valuable has been started, and follow-up is not going to be easy because our work pulls us in so many directions. But we must try, or else the potentialities behind what we have begun will not be meaningfully realized.

5. Other general observations

I have been asked to relate my general observations about the program, the fellows, our Japanese counterparts, Japanese intellectuals, people at large, Japanese culture, and Southeast Asian Studies in Japan. I have already indicated some of my views about the program, which I shall return to in my concluding section.

As for the fellows, let me say that they have enriched my intellectual life in the short space of a few months. There are aspects of what I have learnt from them which I think will always remain with me, aspects of personality and cognitive style, and passion for life. I am grateful to Arnold, Ignas, Kasian, and Manan for extending their friendship and for nudging and challenging me in intellectual debate. Each of the fellows came to be associated with a particular talent: Manan for making social arrangements and giving a sense of direction, Ignas for rigorous philosophizing and coming up with just the right word (in English, Bahasa, German, and Latin), Kasian for his combination of a mischievous critical spirit and a loud, infectious laughter, and Arnold—what can we say?—for being Arnold. Memories of little things, snippets of conversation, gestures of kindness, these I shall carry with me.

This too is the case in my relationship with Japanese friends and fellow intellectuals, whom I have had the privilege of meeting during my stay. We had the chance to engage each other as we engaged the demands of the day in our society, our region and the world. The Shimoda retreat was a high point in our stay, and I shall always remember the depth with which we pursued the issues that were uppermost in our minds. And let us not forget that after all our hard work we discovered during our *karaoke* session that what unites all Asians is their

unapologetic love of the Beatles. Likewise, we sensed that the public symposium at the end of the two-month period stirred much interest, judging not just by the size of the audience but by the kind of questions that were posed to us.

It would take a book for me to do justice to the complex matter of contemporary Japanese social and intellectual life. I have had occasion to share my ruminations on Japanese society during discussions. No generalization about "Japanese society" or "the Japanese intellectual" is useful because it cannot encapsulate the diversity of life within Japan and the inner struggles of individual Japanese. Since my teenage years I have cultivated an interest in Japanese spiritual and aesthetic traditions. I also have an abiding interest in the question of social memory, and here there are significant issues related to the Japanese wartime record in Southeast Asia: how generations and groups of Japanese deal with this past, which also includes the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During my training at Berkeley, I learned about Japan through the works of Robert Bellah and heard Masao Maruyama and Kenzaburo Oë at a conference and later read many of their works translated into English.

Maruyama's death in 1996 signaled for me the passing of an important generation of Japanese intellectuals, although perhaps not the total passing of a particular intellectual spirit, which I hope would continue to animate contemporary intellectuals, and not just in Japan. In particular I am struck by Maruyama's great intellectual effort directed at understanding the historical, sociological, and psychological conditions that shaped and distorted consciousness and action. My own views about contemporary Japanese society are close to the perspective developed in Kenzaburo Oë's "Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself," his 1994 Nobel Prize Speech. For me, Japan represents a particular expression of modernity, of Asian modernity, of the possibilities of modernity and the limits of possibility.

And it will not do for me to simply say that contemporary Japanese society is in a state of crisis. I hope to find the time to set out my reflections on contemporary Japan and show what I mean by such a statement. Tatsuya Tanami, if I recall correctly, once said that contemporary Japan is "a land without a script." There is a great deal of truth in this statement, and if so intellectuals do have a significant role to play. The crisis of Japanese modernity cannot be alleviated by the work of intellectuals alone, but intellectuals must do their work. And the search for a new script would have implications not just for Japanese society but also for Southeast Asia and the world. I say all this at the risk of being misunderstood. I am not just speaking of Japanese modernity and Japanese intellectuals. Ultimately I am addressing not Japanese or other intellectuals but my own conscience as an intellectual. And conscience makes trouble for all of us.

I have also been asked to say something about Japanese culture and the people at large. There is simply too much to say and it cannot be said given the limits of time and space. Let me try one way of saying something by recalling what Kenzaburo Oë says at the end of his Nobel Prize Speech. Oë's critique of the contemporary Japanese order is deep and unrelenting, but he does not stop there and offer no path out of the "chronic disease that has been prevalent throughout the

modern age." At the end of the speech, he invokes the memory of his teacher Kazuo Watanabe whose work sought to "teach the Japanese about humanism, about the importance of tolerance, about man's vulnerability to his preconceptions and to the machinery of his own making." Then Oë concluded with the idea of "the wondrous healing power of art" and with the image of Hikari, his handicapped son, making music, expressing "the voice of a crying and dark soul" and in the process music is "an act of recovery" for both musician and listeners.

Art (and the arts in and out of Singapore) is a personal interest, research area, and social concern of mine. I also study childhood autism in Singapore and subscribe to the idea that a society—its true quality of life and its moral worth—is judged by how it treats its disadvantaged members and how it relates to the disadvantaged of the earth. It was a great privilege that I experienced in Japan one of the most powerful artistic performances that I have come across in my life and that spoke to my concerns. This was a Butoh performance led by Natsu Nakajima entitled "Loitering children going nowhere" performed on the 29th of October 1996 in Yokohama. Nakajima-san and her colleagues had worked with a group of children with Down's Syndrome and their parents, and their performance was filled with the humanism and healing power of art that Oë had written about. I can be critical of Japanese culture and the Japanese people and of any society, including my own, but it behooves any intellectual to try to get at the humanity of the people that he or she is criticizing so that in delving beneath the layers of political and economic structures we know that we are ultimately dealing with human beings. The whole of what contemporary Japanese society is was not captured in that precious performance, but I experienced one significant part of Japan that offered some hope and light.

Finally, a word about Southeast Asian Studies in Japan. I can't do justice to this subject, but more because of ignorance and lack of information. My thoughts on this are rather impressionistic. I find great value in the work of many Japanese scholars on Southeast Asia. I am often impressed by their facility in Southeast Asian languages, their in-depth historical and ethnographic understanding. I know there is some rethinking going on concerning the future directions of Southeast Asian Studies in Japan. My main comment would be in relation to what I said about the difference between a subject-object relation and a subject-subject relation in the study of an "other" culture, society or region. There is much room for both Japanese and Southeast Asian scholars to engage each other in delving into fundamental issues. There are times when I think that quite a lot of Japanese scholarship on Southeast Asian societies stays at the level of empirical detail—which in itself has scholarly value—but does not touch on the larger implications or deeper meanings of a particular phenomenon for Southeast Asians and the world. When the question "What is at stake?" is hardly asked or addressed in academic studies, our understanding of any society or culture is impoverished.

6. Suggestions and recommendations for the future program

The 1996 fellows have given some suggestions for the future development of the program at the end of the two-month collaborative work. I am glad to see that a

number of recommendations have been taken up in the 1997 program. The inclusion of a Japanese participant is a concrete way of addressing some of the concerns that I have discussed earlier. The criteria of selection with a view to bringing together public intellectuals and through nomination from a wide range of sources should be kept. Also, from my experience I urge that selected participants need to be given enough advance notice for them to plan their schedule and negotiate their work commitments, especially if they are to find some way of taking up the full six-month fellowship.

I think the emphasis on "Track III" cooperation is the program's most precious asset, and the independence of I-House in defining the shape of the program, along with its willingness to seek and incorporate the views of the participants should be preserved. I take this opportunity to let my co-fellows know that "Southeast Asia" has come to mean something more real and more special since I met them. Intellectuals are suspicious of artificial categories, empty signifiers into which people, especially those in power, can invest their own meanings. But so can we. Still, I hesitate to say "I am a Southeast Asian" because I know that the term carries special responsibilities for one to know much more about our peoples and our aspirations. I have only just begun.

Report on the Asia Leadership Fellow Program 1996

Kasian Tejapira

First of all, as the Thai member of the first group of fellows in the program, let me commend the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center for their farsighted vision, courage and initiative in launching this unprecedented, innovative endeavor with potentially far-reaching intellectual and cultural impact on East Asia and beyond. For, as far as I understand, what the program's initiators have visualized and tried to bring about, facilitate and support is nothing less than a nongovernmental and non-business so-called "third track" forum for open, free and equal exchange and debate among prominent Asian public intellectuals and social activists on current issues of common concern to their respective societies, as a first step towards the possible formation of an independent and autonomous regional network of Asian civic leaders. Obviously, much more than financial resources are needed to create such a forum and network. Mutual trust, good will and sincerity are the indispensable foundation and building blocks of this kind of international cooperative enterprise. And to the credit of both of its institutional organizers, the overall design and execution of the program as well as its director, coordinators and staff were highly and exemplarily conducive to the flourishing of these essential psychological elements among the fellows.

Achievements and Limitations of the Two-Month Collaborative Research Period

To collaborate in a collective intellectual project, people need to know one another well both personally and intellectually. Based on my own incomplete and limited one-month experience due to my unexpected illness, hospitalization and early departure, I would say that the fellows came to know one another personally fairly well and quickly. (A sure indicator were the friendly jokes about one another's funny, idiosyncratic behavior and personality traits they started cracking in the second week of the program.) I still cherish a vivid memory of a few times when the fellows, in informal gatherings away from the meeting rooms and official agenda, such as on the upper floor of a Roppongi MacDonal's restaurant, discussed, disagreed, argued and debated, excitedly, stimulatingly and thought-provokingly with one another on a wide variety of topics ranging from the philosophy of Karl Popper to the meanings of democracy in various Southeast Asian countries.

I once asked another fellow whether this kind of serious mutual engagement with other fellows' arguments on key issues took place in the program's formal meetings. His answer was no.

But why not?

Let's not forget that we had with us there and then perfect contenders and resource persons for various rounds of Great Debates. Intellectually speaking, these fellows came to Tokyo fully formed and mature. They had, for a long time, engaged their intellectual compatriots in deep and serious public debates on important

cultural, political and socio-economic issues, sharpened their ideas and trained their arguments on their respective reading and thinking national public, won and lost arguments, and become more or less influential opinion-makers in their own respective civil societies. The program provided the fellows with a rare and valuable opportunity and forum to air their domestically developed ideas and arguments before an audience of like-minded international colleagues, to let their views be examined, questioned, challenged, contested and criticized by the latter and see whether or not they could withstand the test and still hold water. Only through open, sincere, serious and uninhibited debates could there be a genuine exchange of ideas and mutual learning among the fellows.

Why didn't they debate with one another in formal meetings as fully and seriously as they could have done? I could think of a number of reasons. First, because they didn't know one another well enough intellectually. That they were relatively ill-informed of one another's intellectual interests, positions and projects was due to the fact that they did not have an adequate chance to introduce and present themselves intellectually to one another in formal occasions. All that was allotted to each fellow according to the schedule was a single session of one or two hours to talk about one's intellectual profile, interests and work. Bibliographies of their English publications and/or copies of selections from their writings were not systemically prepared and provided. Those that were made available were few and far between, random, limited and probably unrepresentative of their overall intellectual vocation. Had more time been allowed for each fellow's formal self-introduction and presentation, and a list and copies of representative readings of his work distributed, they would have had a far better chance to become more acquainted with and knowledgeable about one another's ideas, positions and arguments, found stimulating points of agreement and disagreement, convergence and divergence of interest among themselves, and probably argued and debated with as well as learned from one another much more intensely and fruitfully. Perhaps what is needed is a series of half-day sessions for each of the fellows to take turns to introduce themselves and lecture on some topic(s) of particular personal interest, followed by a week-long break for reading other fellows' writings and for informal gatherings and joint activities in the evenings, and then a resumption of meetings to review and debate each fellow's work and ideas arranged according to a list of topics of common interest compiled by the fellows themselves.

Secondly, there seemed to be certain dynamics peculiar to the gathering of the fellows during the two-month collaborative research period. To be "uprooted" from one's home, family, friends, colleagues and familiar-linguistic, cultural and working environment, and then be "transplanted" to an "I-House" (which was really a hotel rather than a house) in the center of a cosmopolitan metropolis among strangers who spoke in tongues for a considerable period of time, was a rather challenging and disconcerting experience, to say the least. It was a perfect setting not only for meeting new people and making new friends, but also for missing old ones. Thus, some fellows could soon become homesick and set their hearts and minds to home rather than to the seminars and meetings. They might still take part in the

program but, in a way, the program seemed to pass them by without seriously engaging their deep concerns. They might actually disagree with some of the things being said in a seminar but they wouldn't bother to argue, raise an objection, state their contrary opinions or alternative positions, or pursue the argument further. Better be reticent and congenial rather than forthright and argumentative for this was merely a temporary and rather unreal set-up. Let it go along smoothly and uneventfully so that everyone would be happy and, at the end of it, each could then go his or her own separate way back to the real things at home. For the program was, after all, not ours or mine.

This lack of the sense of "ownership," the feeling that the program didn't belong to them, was perhaps the most debilitating psychological factor affecting the fellows' participation in it.

Thirdly, the Japanese presence and context had both positive and distracting effects. Of course, the program had to be held somewhere and it was nice that the venue was Tokyo, with its ample material and human resources, rich intellectual culture, accessible research facilities, and convenient accommodation and transportation. But, understandably, the Japanese presence and context also exerted such strong attraction on the fellows that sometimes they inadvertently veered away from the program's original and main objective, namely to provide an opportunity for Asian civic leaders to get together and discuss among themselves issues of common concern to them and their countries and region (including, but not only, Japan) by availing themselves of local research facilities and resource persons (which happened to be Japanese). Willy-nilly, the themes of discussion and resource persons invited to talk to the program's seminars and meetings resembled more and more those of a crash course on Japanese studies, as if the fellows had come here primarily to learn about Japanese society, culture and history. Of course, there was nothing wrong with learning about Japan and it would be a pity indeed if the fellows didn't make use of this rare opportunity to learn something about their host country, which has become the economic powerhouse of Asia. But that was a different objective which required a different kind of program and group of participants. It wouldn't have the unique objective and special character that made it an "Asia Leadership Fellow Program" but be reduced to a simple program of extended Japanese study tours.

One should realize that the most important resource persons for the program were the fellows themselves, not outsiders, and the most important issues for them to discuss were about their own societies, not Japan.

And yet, despite all the above-mentioned limitations, I got a distinct impression that the fellows did come to know, befriend and learn a lot from one another through comparing their personal and working experiences as well as the situation in their respective countries. That was no mean feat, considering the fact that this was actually an unprecedented and untried innovative international program in its first year with so many possible and unexpected odds against it.

Achievements of My Overall Fellowship Period

It was unfortunate that I fell seriously ill and had to go back home prematurely during the two-month collaborative research period. So I was absent from most of the program's activities in that crucial initial phase and had no chance to do much "collaborating." Therefore, in terms of formal exchange of ideas and networking with other fellows, I am afraid not much was achieved on my part. Personally and intellectually, I became most acquainted with and closest to Kwok Kian-Woon, the Singaporean fellow. This probably had to do with the fact that we both happened to be ethnic Chinese and were intellectually and politically interested in similar issues in our own respective societies, i.e., the ethnic Chinese, cultural politics, public intellectuals, etc. So, in this case, there is a good chance that we can collaborate fruitfully in the future. I was also intrigued and interested in Arnold Azurin's distinct, original and revisionist views on culture and nationhood, which he developed from the Philippine context, as well as in Ignas Kleden's critical and perceptive analyses of Indonesian politics and culture, including his practical experience as an NGO activist there.

In my opinion, the prospects of further collaboration among the fellows gradually and eventually building up into an active, productive, sustainable and long-term regional network depend on two crucial factors, i.e., 1) the emergence within the group of a natural, magnetic leader and 2) a "permanent" secretary who persists with the tedious but indispensable job of maintaining routine communications among them.

For various reasons, factor one was missing from the group whereas Wan Manan has emerged as a natural and perfect candidate for factor two. And I'm happy to report that with regard to our group's first collaborative research project on public intellectuals in Southeast Asia, he is performing the secretarial task effectively and admirably.

As to my own personal research project on "Consuming Thainess: Global Commodities and National Identity," I managed to write up the research report during the one-month extended fellowship period in March 1997. Actually, the collection of research materials and data for the project had already been completed in Thailand prior to my coming back to Tokyo. However, given my many obligations both familial and professional, I couldn't have found the time, seclusion and concentration to write it up in Bangkok. In that sense, my fellowship in Tokyo afforded me the necessary peace, calm and tranquility to think through my whole research and formulate its proper theoretical and conceptual framework.

Besides, I had frequent opportunities to meet and discuss with a number of Japanese academics, journalists and writers, especially those with special interest and expertise in Southeast Asia in general and Thailand in particular, such as Professor Yoneo Ishii of Sophia University, Professor Akira Suehiro of Tokyo University, Professor Takashi Shiraishi of Kyoto University, and others at the Institute of Developing Economies, the Toyota Foundation, and the Japan Foundation Asia Center. Apart from exchanging views with these people and receiving some very interesting and useful research publications and data from them, I also had a chance

to present some of my raw or half-baked evolving hypotheses and ideas on cultural globalization and racist opportunism in Thailand to an audience of learned, Japanese Southeast Asianists and Thai Studies scholars so as to sound them out. Needless to say, I benefited greatly from their critical reaction and comments.

Impressions about My Stay in Japan

My experience of Japan was rather limited in both space and time. Altogether, it lasted less than three months and was exclusively within the city of Tokyo. Moreover, for about two weeks my presence and movement was confined to a single university hospital due to my illness. Therefore, what I am about to report is indeed nothing more than subjective "impressions," destined to be disputed and disproved by objective studies and analyses, but "impressions" nonetheless may be interesting and useful as they are.

(1) At first glance, Japan, as seen through its metropolitan streets and TV programs, looked distinctly much more "Westernized" or, perhaps better still, "Americanized" than their counterparts in Thailand. In public places, virtually every Japanese man wears a suit and tie and every Japanese woman a pair of stockings. Western-styled, bright-color hair-dyeing and flashy make-up was much more fashionable and widespread among women here than in some reputedly very "globalized" Asian cities such as Singapore and Bangkok. European, especially Italian and French, cuisine and restaurants seemed to be all the rage for the Japanese public. And for a country that still maintains its own unique national language and non-Romanized script, the free-wheeling and common sprinkling of English terms onto the words of many a Japanese popular song (especially title songs of cartoon movies) was astonishing.

(2) And yet, when one observed the Japanese at work closely enough, one could distinguish traces of an altogether non-Western and residual stiff hierarchical structure and paternalistic relationships and ethos among them behind the Westernized, Americanized or "Globalized" veneer. Be it at the I-House program office, the I-House coffee shop, or the university hospital where I stayed, subordinate and junior personnel showed a very high degree of deference, obedience and loyalty to their bosses and senior colleagues, as if the relationships that obtained had been master-apprentice or patron-client ones. Orders were dutifully and strictly executed by the former; opinions with regard to anything new, unexpected or unusual were constantly sought from the higher-ups before any action would be taken; their mouths were tightly shut when attending a meeting with an outsider in the presence of their bosses; and not a single bad or critical word was ever uttered against the latter behind their backs even in private. A boss and his closest assistant might have their desks set next to each other but one could tell from the way the assistant always referred respectfully and compliantly to the boss that the psychological and power distance between them was huge.

(3) Rules, regulations and established procedures of all sorts, including even items on a menu, were fetishized and strictly and rigidly adhered to even when the circumstances that obtained in some particular cases practically demanded

otherwise. Regularity, predictability and certainty were the order of the day whereas flexibility, pragmatism and improvisation seemed out of the Japanese order. As if moulded from a multiple-choice mindset, the Japanese worker became out of his or her depth and disconcerted when confronted with an unusual situation or request that called for an unconventional, unpremeditated alternative to be taken.

(4) It appeared to me that the Japanese presence in the outside world and especially in Southeast Asia was uneven in character, i.e., it was more economic and touristy than cultural and intellectual. This was due primarily to the fact that while English was the lingua franca of the present generation of Southeast Asian intellectuals, many of whom were trained in America or Europe, most Japanese intellectuals did not speak or write in English. Besides, only a small if growing number of Japanese academic, literary, journalistic and cultural works were available in English whereas the Southeast Asian reading public and audience in general practically knew no Japanese, an incongruous situation resulting in largely deserted Japanese bookshops and shelves upon shelves and piles upon piles of unborrowed and uncatalogued, donated Japanese books in university libraries in Bangkok. One would only wait in vain for the currently dominant Anglophone Southeast Asian intellectuals to go Japanese, and it will take perhaps at least 15 to 20 years for a new generation of Japanese-trained and -speaking intellectuals to arise and take the older ones' place, if that is ever possible at all.

So, for the foreseeable future, if Japan seriously wishes to enhance its intellectual and cultural presence, contact and network in the region, there is no escape from "going English" for both its intellectual and cultural products.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Future Programs

Most of my suggestions and recommendations for the Program have already been made earlier, so I won't repeat them again. Rather, I would like to point out one specific issue of crucial if still neglected importance to the Program, namely the health of the fellows.

As the one fellow who fell seriously ill during the Program and hence had hands-on experience of the matter, I think the Program's director and staff initially underestimated the severity of my illness, resulting in my excruciating sufferings, belated hospitalization, prolonged sickness and slow recovery. Coolness and caution were of course the marks of capable leadership. But when dealing with an emergency situation of unknown disease, physical pain and rapidly deteriorating health, coolness could hardly be distinguished from cold-bloodedness and caution from indecision. The nature and symptoms of diseases prevalent in the tropical countries of Southeast Asia are different from those common in Japan and generally unfamiliar to Japanese doctors.

Given these facts, one should be particularly alarmed at and concerned about any instance of illness among the fellows from that region and every necessary advance measure and action should be taken to prevent its aggravation. For example, fellows should be required to undergo a medical check-up before leaving their home country and bring the check-up report along with their health profile to

Japan. Regrettably, none of these had been done in a timely manner in my case.

Be that as it might, once I was hospitalized and the seriousness of my illness realized, the Program's director and staff were the best friends an expatriate patient could hope for in place of his closest family members. The constant and unfailing care, devotion and responsibility they bestowed upon me were exemplary and beyond any and all expectations. It left a profound and heartfelt positive impression of the Japanese people upon me that would certainly long outlast my unfortunate illness.

1996 Asia Leadership Fellow Program Report

Wan A. Manan

Introduction

The Asia Leadership Fellow Program, which was organized and sponsored by the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation, respectively, was a pioneer program of its kind. The fellows that participated in the two-month intensive program came from varied backgrounds and disciplines. As one of the participating fellows I found the fellowship period very fulfilling intellectually and a very useful resource in charting my future endeavours. As planned by the organizers, this program was a Track III channel where individuals from several Asian countries were selected, as opposed to the Track II where the exchange is mainly through people representing institutions or think tanks, and Track I which means a government to government channel. The fellows for this program were people who are rather independent; some are working in government universities, but as academicians they are quite independent and are free to express their opinion, even be critical of their own governments. Therefore, the atmosphere created by the Fellowship program encouraged a free exchange of ideas and experiences, and was also very conducive towards discussing a higher level of cooperation between individuals and organizations. This report will highlight some of the activities that we were involved in during our period in Japan and also personal perceptions and reflections during my six-month stay in Japan.

Collaborative Research (October 1–November 30, 1996)

After our arrival on October 1, 1996 at the International House of Japan, the program proceeded on schedule, except for the late arrival of Dr. Ignas Kleden due to his work commitment in Indonesia. The fellows began to interact with each other freely even before the program orientation; nonetheless, the orientation and welcoming session on October 3 was very informative and gave us a better picture about the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation, the two organizations which were responsible for our presence in Japan. Having understood the role and functions of both organizations we were more at ease in proceeding to our next phase, which basically involved a lot of discussion, readings and debating on issues that were raised during the succeeding days and weeks.

The week starting with October 7, 1996, where the first presentation by attending fellows was conducted, was the beginning of a series of serious discussions among the fellows themselves and also the organizers. The tone that was set by the presentation served as a pacesetter for us to delve into various topics of interest and concern in the following weeks to come. Apart from discussions among the permanent members of our workshop, which included the fellows, the coordinator and the staff of the International House and the Japan Foundation, we were also exposed to other speakers of different wavelengths in their understanding and

perspective about culture and society. This gave us a new dimension of looking at things from the opposite direction or the other end of the spectrum. The presentations by different resource persons enriched our understanding not only about Japan, but also broadened our views in relation to other cultures. The manner in which the presentation and discussions were held gave us ample time to argue and elaborate on points of contention. Based on this short exposure and interaction among the fellows we managed to work out a topic and area of concern to be discussed at the weekend retreat in Shimoda.

The weekend seminar in Shimoda on "Development and Culture: Personal Reflection" and "Critical Concerns of Southeast Asian Intellectuals—Crisis and Confluence" was the highlight of our interaction with the Japanese scholars and intellectuals. The seminar was very fruitful because it gave us a place to exchange ideas and also to debate the strength and weakness of certain approaches in constructing and analyzing prevailing cultural ideology and understandings. At times there were tense moments and disagreement among the participants, but at the end of the seminar we felt we were more informed about our weakness and fallibility regarding imposing our version of reality on others. The seminar did help a lot in the preparation towards the Public Symposium that was held on November 29, 1996.

The Public Symposium was the grand finale of our two-month stay at the International House and it was well attended. At the symposium we all presented our concerns about the future of Southeast Asia and other related issues such as the role of intellectuals, the challenge of modernity, globalization and local challenges, and the future of human rights, etc. The audience participated by asking us questions, challenging our views and also providing their comments and alternative views. The symposium was a success by our standard of evaluation.

Apart from the program and activities organized at the International House, we also had the opportunity to participate in and attend other forums and conferences. On October 18–20, 1996, for example, we went to Kyoto to attend the International Conference on Southeast Asian Studies. It was a well-attended conference with many Japanese and foreign experts on Southeast Asia presenting their papers and findings. We benefited a lot from the conference, not only the papers and presentations but also the opportunity to exchange ideas and meet new friends and contacts. Other conferences and seminars that I attended include the seminar on "Culture and Identity—Ethnic Coexistence in Asia" organized by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (October 23, 1996), "Shaping a Sustainable Urban Future—Habitat II and Challenge to Civil Society," United Nations University (October 24, 1996), and "The United Nations System in the 21st Century—Peace and Security," United Nations University (November 8–9, 1996).

On the whole, the two-month period we stayed together at the International House and our participation in various programs, either formally scheduled or otherwise, were very interesting and eye-opening. We learned a lot within a short period; we have educated ourselves through listening to other experts, readings, the mass media, and other forms of interaction and observation within the vicinity of Roppongi in particular and Tokyo in general. The interaction among us fellows have

given us precious moments that we will cherish in many years to come; we have learnt a lot from each other about our culture, the public and the sensitive aspects of them.

Individual Research Activities (December 1, 1996–March 31, 1997)

Even though most of the fellows left Japan after the two-month stay at the International House, I continued to stay in Japan to pursue my research on the quality of life. Furthermore, I was on sabbatical and planned in such a way that I could take full advantage of my stay in Japan and maximize the available potential that I still had in exploring the issue of the quality of life in Japan. My original proposal was to do a comparative study on the quality of life in Japan and Malaysia. I have not completed the research, and am still reading and collecting data now, before I embark on writing a report or a monograph.

I continued to stay in Japan for the next four months after the collaborative research period ended with continued funding from the fellowship sponsors. From December 1996 to the end of March 1997, I attached myself at the School of International Health, University of Tokyo. Basically during this four-month period I began my library search and secondary data collection on the Japanese population and relevant statistics. It was not an easy job, because publications of those materials that I was looking for in English was very scanty, and in addition I was still a novice in this game. However, with the help of staff and students at the university and also the staff of the International House I managed to overcome many barriers such as language, technical and administrative matters during the course of my research.

My research involved mainly library work and compiling information on selected topics, particularly on the quality of life in general, aging in Japan, the support system for the elderly, and on the health status, educational status, civil society variables, and worldviews that shaped the Japanese mind and practices. Based on preliminary readings, I found that the quality of life in Japan was rather high compared with other countries, particularly Malaysia; this was based on the comparison of objective indicators only. However, when subjective indicators are evaluated, the problem of relativism comes into play and it is very difficult to score an index. For example, how do we prove that people in Japan are happier than in Malaysia or in general the Japanese people are more depressed than people in Malaysia? These are some of the issues that I was contemplating during my investigation. In addition to library research and information gathering, I also met many experts and professors from several institution, attended seminars and also made several presentations.

During the four-month period I also participated in the weekly seminar organized by the Institute of Population and Social Security, Ministry of Health and Welfare. The topics of their guest presentations were very relevant to my research work; these include:

- 1 . "Demographic Transition in India with Special Reference to Kerala"
by Professor P. S. Nair (Kerala University), January 10, 1997.

2. "Urban-rural Differentials of the Living Arrangements Among Korean Elderly" by Prof. Ik Ki Kim (Dongguk University), January 16, 1997.
3. "The New Strategy of Urbanization in China Since the 1980's" by Prof. Ma Rong (Peking University), February 20, 1997.

On February 13–15, 1997 the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation, with the cooperation of a host of other organizations from Japan and Asia, organized an International Conference of Asian Foundations and Organizations under the theme: "Envisioning the Future—International Cooperation among Asian Foundations and Organizations." I am glad to have participated in that conference and been able to meet Japanese as well as Asian delegates from non-government organizations and grant-making foundations. I also benefited from the long discussion and debates in the workshop on civil society, of which I was one of the participants. The conference was successful in bringing together people and organizations from diverse interests and places; at the end of the conference they came to a general agreement that they need to work together and form an Asian network in order to be more effective in championing their causes.

I also had the opportunity to do several presentations on my research interest and research findings. On March 5, 1997, I presented a paper entitled "Health and Nutritional Status of the Elderly in Kelantan, Malaysia" at the Graduate School of International Health, University of Tokyo. These are the results of our studies on the elderly in Kelantan, Malaysia, which we have been conducting for the past four years. On March 29, 1997, I presented a paper on the "Quality of Life in Malaysia" to the Japanese Association of Malaysian Studies (JAMS) at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. This paper is based on my recent article "Quality of Life" in *Malaysia's Economic Development: Policy and Reform* (eds: Jomo K.S. & Ng Siew Kiat) (1996). We had a long discussion after the presentation with a lot of feedback and criticisms on the concept and measurement of quality of life.

General Impressions

Living in Japan for six months provided me an opportunity to observe and look at Japanese society closer with respect to its people and behavior. In terms of physical development and industrialization, Japan is very advanced, particularly in the public infrastructure sector. Public facilities are very efficient as compared to other countries that I have visited; these include the public transport, particularly the trains and subways. Despite being a very big city, Tokyo seems to accommodate a lot of activities in an organized way, and the city is also very safe. There are a lot of signs which can guide visitors to their destination, even though they cannot read or speak Japanese. Most of the signs and instructions are bilingual (Japanese and English), and that makes it easy to follow, of course provided that you read English. Occasionally we can also find a few inaccurate translations which sound rather funny or awkward in English.

The Japanese people in general are very polite; they are polite not only to foreigners, but first of all among themselves. I think it is a habit that has been

cultivated in the society and also a way of life. In that sense the Japanese as a whole seem to be very organized and systematic in conducting their work and leisure. Even though there exist differences in behavior and personal manifestations, as a group the Japanese are uniform, so that we can expect the kind of response or reaction they will give to certain phenomena. This is my personal observation based on my encounters with the Japanese people during a short stay and limited interaction. Another observation which struck me is the harmony or civility of Japanese adolescents and young people; despite being in crowded places they seem to congregate in groups and enjoy themselves, either in restaurants, entertainment premises or on the streets. There is less tendency towards criminality and violence; I hardly saw a fight or a street argument, as are often the case in other big cities of the world. Furthermore the culture of vandalism is absent in Japanese cities. Public facilities such as telephones, toilets and bus stands are untouched by graffiti.

Another aspect of Japanese society which attracted my attention was the love for reading; this is very prevalent, particularly in public transportation and bookstores. The bookstores in Japan are frequented by many people of all ages, and they are as crowded as the supermarket. But foreign language books in Japan are very expensive. I wonder why, is it because less people read foreign books or is it a way of controlling the incoming of foreign books and protecting the local publications?

Japanese Intellectuals and Scholars

After meeting and listening to various Japanese scholars or intellectuals in their talks, presentations and what was printed in the mass media I still cannot form an opinion on them as a group. But, nonetheless, what is common among them is the sense of guilt they carried, that is, the guilt of the Second World War, particularly in relation to Southeast Asians. They were very apologetic and cautious in making comments about other countries. Despite the atonement they had paid, in terms of finance and other forms of aid, they still have not fully recovered or cleaned themselves from the sins of World War II committed by their government. I met several groups of people whom I considered as Japanese intellectuals, but very often they are very reserved in making their comments and their stand on certain issues. Most of them are very generous in criticizing the Japanese government and the LDP, but when confronted with more universal or foreign problems, they seem to be reluctant to criticize the wrongdoings of other countries and governments, even though we know, for example, a particular government is very repressive and abuses human rights. The Japanese intellectuals that I met were very diplomatic and were willing more to listen than to offer their personal opinions.

My impression about Japanese intellectuals may be misleading. On the contrary, I also met a few intellectuals who are very vocal and make no apologies about their stances on issues with which they are fully committed. In relation to Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular, most Japanese intellectuals are not well informed, except those who are involved in area studies of a particular region or country. Intellectually the Japanese academicians are more Western-oriented in their

knowledge and subject matter. Most of them have been to the West or studied in the West (Europe and America) or they have a mentor in the West. This is not surprising, because since the Meiji Restoration Japan began to emulate the West not only in terms of industrialization but also in the knowledge sector, where their universities have churned out thousands of graduates whose education is based on the German or American system. In this respect, Japan is far more advanced than other Asian countries in the field of tertiary education and has a large number of trained professionals in every field. In fact, Japan is at a par or even more advanced in some areas of studies and research than most of the universities in Europe and North America.

Based on my short assessment I came to the conclusion that Japanese intellectuals are very diverse and are not very active as other professions or professionals; they have passed their prime. Intellectuals are marginalized and on the fringe of the mainstream. Probably the role of intellectuals in a techno-society has been greatly reduced. Unless they assert themselves or adopt a new strategy to make their voice or concerns heard, they are on the verge of being swallowed up by the waves of business, corporatism, and globalization. I may be wrong in my analysis about Japanese intellectuals, because my inferences are based on works and printed materials in English only; in fact some of the talks we had with intellectuals were also conducted in English.

Southeast Asian Fellows

Being one of the fellows in the same program makes it difficult for me to give an impartial evaluation of our conduct during the fellowship program. Nonetheless, I consider it important for me to give my opinion on the running of the program and interaction among us. Except for Dr. Kasian Tejapira from Thammasat University, who fell ill for most of the duration of the program and had to take medical leave, the four of us (myself, Dr. Ignas Kleden, Dr. Kwok Kian Woon and Arnold Azurin) got along very well and managed to hold long discussions in various places. We also had the opportunity to know each other, not only as citizens of another ASEAN nation, but as individuals, friends, colleagues and persons of other religious denominations.

Our interaction within the two-month period was really a learning experience; in fact, I learned more from the other fellows through informal and casual discussions than some of the formal sessions. It was also a test of our patience in dealing with other people of various idiosyncrasies who sometimes surprised us with what they said or did. But that is part of learning and building a bridge of cultural understanding, which I think is very important if we Southeast Asian fellows are going to have a continuous rapport in the future. It is also part of creating tolerance among us despite our differences in religious belief, culture, ethnicity and ideology.

I have to admit also that there were times when our ideas and propositions clashed or were in opposition to each other, but with careful explanation and a spirit of working together we managed to resolve them amicably. It is normal for us to be

critical of other people's ideas and interpretations of reality when we have lived under different social conditions or regimes. In a way we have been successful in getting to know each other better and also initiate the seed of cooperation towards a more advanced networking among us in Southeast Asia in the future. And in this respect we have fulfilled one of the objectives of the fellowship program.

Future Plans and Follow-ups

What transpired from our two months together were several proposals on how to continue our collaboration between us Southeast Asian fellows and our Japanese counterparts, namely, the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center, Intellectual Exchange Division. We proposed to continue our cooperation through a form of networking which will include other colleagues in our countries who can contribute to make the new network a viable and dynamic one. However, we think that the initial steps should be started by us and among us first. For this reason we have decided to embark on a few projects:

1. The Book Project—We agreed to publish a book on the intellectual history of each of our countries and societies with an additional contribution from Japan. This book project is supposed to be in preparation now, and I will act as the coordinator. We expect to publish it in 1998. The contributors to the book will consist of all of us 1996 fellows and our Japanese contributors. The book will discuss the intellectual history and activities in our countries based partly on what we have discussed at length among us and in our workshops during the fellowship program. The book will compile our reflections, thoughts and perceptions about our own society, our roles and how can we be more effective in exercising our participation.

2. International Conference—We plan to organize an international conference in Malaysia in 1998 and at the same time launch the book that was discussed above. The theme of the conference that we agreed on was "Asian Values." This conference will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and will be organized by the Malaysian Academic Movement (MOVE) in collaboration with the Centre for Leadership and Development Studies (CELDES), the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center. Currently we are at the preliminary stage of organizing our plans, which include the proposal of the theme of the conference, the place to be held, the expected number of participants, the number of speakers and sessions, and many other technical aspects of the conference. Once the initial steps are finalized we will submit them for funding to the relevant grant-making foundations in Malaysia and Japan.

For the conference we hope all fellows will do a presentation and we will invite other colleagues from Asian countries to participate. This conference will be a test of our collaboration before any future projects can be implemented. If this conference is successful we may organize another one in another country under a different theme in two to three years' time. Hopefully each of us will host one conference each in our country within the next ten years.

3. Research Projects—We also talked about coordinating research projects relating to issues of common interest in the ASEAN region. The topics that have

been suggested include human rights, globalization, Asian values, multiculturalism and development. We hope this project will be conducted by a group of people in each country, and at the end of the project we will organize a seminar to present our findings and later compile them into a published book.

Conclusion

I have to conclude this brief report with a positive note because I think the effort that has been implemented by the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center is very unique and commendable. As the pioneers of the Asia Leadership Fellow Program we went through grilling and extensive discussions, which I found to be very relevant to our future dialogue people to people as opposed to between governments or institutions. Generally I found the program to be very exciting and enlightening, despite its intensive nature. We may not have had enough time to read widely before each workshop or presentation, but we learned a tremendous amount of new things through our colleagues' knowledge and experience. This is the part which cannot be substituted by reading or attending formal courses. For a person like myself who has been heavily involved with teaching and research for many years, attendance in the Program gave me time to ponder and reflect on all the things that I had been trying to ask and discuss. Even though between my busy schedules in Malaysia I still steal the time to be involved in social and organizational activities, they were sometimes done in a hurried or ad hoc manner. So the time that we had at the International House of Japan during the program was a golden opportunity for me to reexamine my thoughts and debate them with friends who shared the same concerns.

Round-table Discussion
"Asian Values and Development"

Asian Values and Development:

Round-Table Discussion among the 1996 Asia Leadership Fellows

This is an edited transcript of the round-table discussion held at the Japan Foundation Asia Center, Tokyo on November 20, 1996.

ALAN FEINSTEIN (AF, Moderator; Coordinator, Japan Foundation Asia Center): Let's begin this discussion by talking about how economic growth—"development," in other words—has become an ideology that dictates to every other sphere of society, while social, political, cultural aspects are expected to play subsidiary roles. Are values therefore being manipulated to serve this economic growth?

ARNOLD AZURIN (AA): In the Philippines, it is true that social change is through economic development. On the other hand, this kind of mega-planning for the whole country has also generated an opposite force, which is a rise of ethnic and autonomous aspirations. So, as the national elite tries to impose its own program of economic development, people in the regions—especially in the mountain areas and in the southern Philippines—now try to react to this national pressure by maintaining their own hold on their natural regional resources.

What happens is—in the Philippines especially—that there is now a rise of what I would call "ethno-nationalism." But ethno-nationalism in the regional parameters, which is in contrast to the smaller tribal sectors in a regional inter-tribal basis, is also a development in reaction to the economic blueprint of the national government. There is a polarity between ethnicity, and national interest. That's why in the Philippines we have so-called "rebel-infested areas" and there is a rise of autonomous sentiments. On the other hand, while there are armed confrontations between the forces of the state and the interest of the national elite going into the regional domains for the exploitation of the natural resources found there, there is now a conflict among the "national interests." The problem with the ethnic domains, as in the Cordillera, is that they have tried to resist the national imposition to grab their natural resources, but they are not unified enough to protect or safeguard their interest. And it is not so difficult for the national government to engage in "divide and rule." Inasmuch as the national government already has politicians in the national political structure representing people from these regions, all they do is just give them enough money to what they call the "country-wide development fund" to try to make people accept national economic planning, because, after all, the people can share in, let's say, a project on a farm-to-market road, or small irrigation. All these things to placate the people in the regions are supposed to be sufficient for regional development. But the articulators in the regions, especially the NGOs (Non Government Organizations), are sure that these are only palliatives, and in the give-and-take the national government is giving too little for the big size of the natural resources. For instance, in the Cordillera there are mining and logging concessions

being targeted.

What I am trying to bring out here is that development between national domain and development for regional interests of the people living there do not have to be contradictory. However, in the balance, the national government seems to be taking more, and people in the regions are only left with the crumbs in these development schemes. In fact, there is a term that they use now, "development aggression." These programs have not been formulated with consultation with the people involved. This spawns rebellious sentiments. It is also used by the National Democratic Front, the Marxist group in the Philippines, to keep rallying the people against national government imposition.

On the other hand, what would be necessary to make development less painful and less inequitable an arrangement would be the rise of researchers and articulators in the region who can really find out the values of the people, what kind of risk or sacrifices they can absorb, so as to make the regional development and national development blend together for progress. Of course, when we talk about progress, we do not just mean economic development but how much of the regional heritage is not being eroded by this economic blueprint. Unfortunately, in the Cordillera in particular, there are two few articulators and researchers of the people. The problem is that scholars operating there are still very much a part of the national academic bureaucracy. Instead of linking up with the grassroots to find out specific problems, scholars are mostly doing something that is too academic. The NGOs, while they are focused, seem to be carrying an ideological burden instead of talking more with people and learning more and trying to articulate the values and sentiments of the people.

AF: Are you saying that the social scientists or the researchers, whether in the academy or as part of the NGO network, are trying to impose national values on local communities which do not necessarily share those values?

AA: The scholars and researchers are trying to educate the communities. The presumption of this education from the outside is that the Cordillera is inter-tribalistic in sentiment. There are five major tribes there that, while they can use English among themselves, they use Ilocano also to communicate. They seem to be opposed to one another when it comes to securing their own tribal domain. So, these NGOs would rather regionalize the people's consciousness away from these tribalistic roots. There is a disjuncture here. The people have not yet unified to talk of regional unity and a regional ecological interest, for instance.

AF: Do you mean a region within the nation?

AA: Yes. As adjacent ethnic groups they have not come to a unified stand. So, the process of economic development is also either lopsided or it is not really going according to the government plan.

AF: This is something that Ignas Kleden writes about in his paper, that Indonesian social scientists have been given the role in the New Order development scheme of ensuring that the social, political and cultural aspects of society don't hinder development, but enhance it. In a sense then, intellectuals have been "bought off." They've agreed to serve the role of worshipping the god of development. In fact, development has become an ideology in itself.

IGNAS KLEDEN (IK): That's right. I think that this is partly due to the internal politics of Indonesia. "Technology," "stages of growth," etc., beset the mind of Indonesian government and Indonesian social scientists, as well. Now, I think, there is a counterbalance: one is that the self-evident nature of economic development is decreasing. People have started raising questions, e.g., "we have to sacrifice something in order to have economic growth; but what in the last analysis do we get by sacrificing all our political rights, our cultural values?" So, economic development is not as self-evident any more as it was before.

Again, even the government is realizing now that economic growth has brought about some unintended results which it and the Indonesian people never envisaged before. We never thought that economic growth could strengthen the political carrying capacity of certain groups, which would make them able to finance, say, political opposition, as in the case of Megawati. We tend to believe that as economic growth goes on, then everybody will be satisfied with the political situation, they will welcome all the government is doing, etc. But it is not like that.

AF: According to the laws of a growth-oriented economy, where real political debate is considered to be a negative value because stability is essential for the growth of the economy and to encourage investment, everyone has to agree that democracy should play a subsidiary role in the course of economic development. Are you saying that these assumptions are being rejected?

IK: In the Indonesian political context I think that such arguments hold true now if you assume the self-evidence of economic development as something that legitimizes the rule of the New Order. Why economic development is so important is that it is one thing that the New Order can offer to legitimize and to justify its existence and its governance, vis-à-vis the Old Order, which failed so evidently in economic development. If we take this argumentation for granted, then the whole political argument, as you said before, can have its force. But people have started questioning this assumption. "Why should we keep on pushing for economic development if it means making so many sacrifices?" "Should we carry on limiting our political rights in order to have this development continue, while giving opportunities to certain classes or groups to concentrate the results of economic development for their own interest, while keeping the so-called 'trickle-down effect' for other groups?" So, I don't think this political argumentation still has much force anymore, because the underlying assumption of the self-evidence of economic development is collapsing.

AF: You say in your article that the state in Indonesia makes recourse to the notion of "harmony" as a value. Harmony, above all, is essential to the smooth running of the state. Is this assumption also being questioned? Is it being imposed in Indonesia in the same way as in the Philippines, as described by Arnold?

IK: It has been increasingly questioned in view of the violence that is taking place. The question is, should we believe that we still have harmony, despite all the violence? We have to change our mind-set and start saying that not everything is quite so harmonious as we had tended to believe. And we, the critical intellectuals in Indonesia, have started saying publicly that if we assume that harmony is something so fundamental in our culture, this can lead to the effect that we ignore all the violence that is taking place under the pretext of harmony, and we even come to justify all these power abuses by pretending that they are only trivial in comparison to the basic harmony that is supposed to exist. Harmony is something esthetic, in my view. Harmony has little to do with ethical considerations. It is basically an esthetic outlook, which means that you have to be able to put all these things together in good equilibrium in order that they look beautiful. In that sense, harmony is a cultural way to justify political wrongdoing, and even power abuses and offenses against human rights.

KWOK KIAN-WOON (KK-W): [On the subject of Asian values, such as harmony], I think this is an old problem in the whole Asian region. So, in China and Japan, for example, during the time of early modernization, there was an old slogan which can be translated something like "Eastern Morality and Western Technology," or "Eastern Values and Western Science." So, from very early on in Asia—this is repeated slightly differently in Southeast Asia—there was already a kind of bifurcation, with values being Asian and science and technology being Western. But the moment that Asian societies have in fact come some distance in modernization in science and technology, you cannot simply say that modernization is equal to Westernization, and that science and technology are just Western and that we are simply borrowing. Because in some ways we have brought not just technology but also the mentality behind it into our local forms of life, especially through education. So, there are also values behind technology, behind modernization, industrialization. The dichotomy between values and technology has, in fact, been breaking down for many decades. But in the Southeast Asian case, when countries begin to experience rapid modernization, we have a kind of triangular problem. There is economic growth which is being achieved especially more recently, but going along with that, there is an insistence on "political stability" or what you have been calling "harmony," or what we call in Singapore "consensus." But there is a third corner of the triangle, which is the whole area of "culture." What happens to culture? I think that officially the whole problem is seen in terms of culture providing a kind of support for modernization. Therefore, for some time, there has been a debate about Confucianism being serviceable to the demands of modernization. It is like finding an equivalent for the Protestant ethic in the West. But, of course, Singapore is a

multi-racial society, so you cannot talk about Confucianism only, since Confucianism is linked to one particular ethnic group, the Chinese. Hence the discourse on "Asian Values."

With the late twentieth-century phenomenon of the "Rise of Asia," the ASEAN region is very dynamic, and China and India are emerging from conditions of poverty, especially China, coming out of Communism, and the Indochinese states emerging from socialism. With this kind of economic dynamism, and with Japan providing some sort of example, there is this search for a cultural correlation to the economic dynamism. But this project has another side, I think, which is less often talked about: reflections on the consequences of modernization, especially the negative and unintended ones. If we go beyond talking about culture at the ideological level, which fits so well with economic growth and political stability, at an underlying, more fundamental level, in fact, the sphere of culture is seriously challenged under conditions of modernization. Hence, there emerges what may be called the problem of meaning, or what I call the problem of "social coherence."

AF: There is a kind of sacrifice involved which what Ignas was talking about earlier. It seems to me that your metaphor of a triangle is really a kind of pyramid in which economic growth is at the top, while culture and political discourses are subservient, rather than being on the equal corners of a triangle.

KK-W: That's right. That sums up the ideology of developmentalism.

AF: So is it true that culture—or Asian values—is used as an argument, as in the case of Mahathir, to defend the ideology of development?

WAN MANAN (WM): Since 1970, there has been a new economic policy in Malaysia. The government discovered that the Malays, the so-called "Bumiputera," including the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak, owned less than 3 percent of the economic participation and ownership, while foreigners owned 60 to 70 percent, and non-Bumiputera (Chinese and Indians) owned about 30 percent. That was the beginning of the economic engine in Malaysia, which was equivalent to affirmative action, but it is an open kind of discriminatory policy, in which the Malays and Bumiputera were given twenty years to make sure that they got about 30 percent of economic participation and ownership by 1990.

The two objectives of the New Economic Policy were to abolish poverty and to restructure society, because those who were living in poverty were mostly Bumiputera at that time. By 1990, they had not achieved the goal, but only about 10 percent ownership and participation. The per capita income of the country has improved dramatically. But indirectly this relative poverty is beginning to widen, although absolute poverty in Malaysia has decreased from 40 percent in 1970 to 17 percent in 1994. We still have pockets of poverty based on regional difference, but not so much along racial lines anymore.

According to the World Bank this New Economic Policy is a success in

economic planning and engineering in the Third World and there are few other projects that go along that line. But after 1990, the Malaysian government took a more open economic policy, which they call *laissez faire*, but with a lot of interference by the government and government cronies. A lot of these government cronies are those who are rich and who come from the Chinese *towkays* and a few new Malay millionaires. When Mahathir first came to power in 1981, he started the "Look East" policy by looking to Japan as a model for economic growth, to imitate the work discipline of the Japanese, and to send students to Japan and Korea to study in mostly technical fields. I think that was partly due to the earlier failure of transfer of technology when Japan came to Southeast Asia to supposedly transfer technology, but all the management was actually Japanese and so the local people were only workers. I think that in Malaysia it's more of a matter of modernization than development. Modernization in Malaysia has brought about local challenges and responses, particularly in the mid-1970s from the resurgence of Islam. Because of the craze for economic development without morality, the Muslims in particular are very sensitive to getting money with interest. So now banking in Malaysia has introduced "Muslim banking." The local response on this issue has made the government more cautious in what it introduces, even leading to what they call "instilling Islamic values" in government policies, just to counter the opposition within the country.

AF: What about non-Muslims?

WM: Non-Muslims are not affected. They can still make money through interest, etc. Islamic banking doesn't affect the real running of the economy. Malaysia has had a quite remarkable growth, 8 percent or more per year for the last ten years. But Malaysia has paid high costs domestically in terms of political freedom. When Mahathir goes abroad, he is the champion of the Third World, of human rights; but domestically he is playing a different game. Even university students cannot voice their own opinion unless they get permission from the Vice-Chancellor, even the staff can get sacked by the university for being too outspoken. So what you are producing, apart from economic growth, are obedient civil servants, obedient students, obedient graduates.

But the focus now is more on the NGOs. After the expansion of the middle class, people's needs have been continuously growing. New consciousness, consciousness of environmental degradation and of displacement of indigenous people in Sarawak, where they're building this \$5 billion Bakung dam, is coming into the country and creates efforts for expanding the democratic space in the country. Another problem in Malaysia is immigrant workers. Most of the Japanese factories in Malaysia are now electronics industries which are hiring workers from Bangladesh and Indonesia. Among workers, 1 million are legal and 2 million are illegal workers.

AF: As in Indonesia, perhaps Malaysia is not willing to pay the high social cost of economic development?

WM: In Malaysia we have not been indoctrinated in that way, so it will take some time for people to reach this realization. But educated groups of the middle class, including NGOs, consumer groups, and political parties, are beginning to realize that there is a limit to all the costs we are paying. Because, we need some freedom also. So, indirectly, there is a move towards recognizing the threat to freedom in the country. The Islamic challenge in Malaysia is not like in the Middle East. It is more integrated well with other aspects of human rights, not fundamentalist, nonviolent.

AF: Are there, in fact, Muslim activists who are arguing for more space for human rights based on religious arguments?

WM: Yes, there are arguments even by the Islamic party in Parliament against the most stringent laws of the government, the Internal Security Act, saying that you should not detain people without trials. Now they are detaining Muslims accused of being "deviant." Al-Arqam, for example, among others. Indirectly Al-Arqam is a challenge, since they are working at alternative development in rural areas, where the local economy operates. They are not dependent on the government. The government is not yet used to independence; it even accuses consumer groups of being spies, "tools of the West." But things will change. The "Asian values" thing is selling quite well in the country.

AF: But it's mostly for export. When people like Mahathir, Soeharto, Lee Kwan Yew talk about Asian values, they are not looking inwards at their own societies—the question of values, the national project as opposed to local needs, aspirations, or participation—but rather reflecting a focus outwards. They're saying, "Don't tell us what to do. We are following our own set of values." Is there a logical problem here or is it a case of pure hypocrisy?

AA: It's also just good tactics. After all, the powerful nations elsewhere are dictating and using certain values elsewhere to exact economic privileges. Like the U.S.'s "open skies" policy in which they put demands on Japan or the Philippines or other countries. From the beginning this has been an inequitable policy—"keep your skies open." So, with this "liberalization" as a slogan elsewhere, at a practical level Asian leaders are trying to make their own defenses using Asian values as a slogan, although it might have a hollow ring, especially in terms of internal situations. But, in the Philippines, if you notice, Asian values as a slogan does not have much currency. Among ASEAN nations, the Philippines seems to be the most porous in accepting Western, modern values. But in the struggle for more equitable development that would accrue to the people's interest, our slogan seems to be more of democratic rights, human rights, so the NGOs are more active there. They don't ever make use of the banner of "Asian values" in the Philippines.

AF: It's odd that in a place like Malaysia you find strange bedfellows—an activist like

Chandra Muzaffar seems to be using the argument of Asian values to reject the hegemony of the Western discourse on human rights in a way that actually resonates with Mahathir's use of the slogan.

WM: I think this is what a lot of intellectuals in Asia are dealing with. There was a proposition put forward at a meeting in Bangkok prior to the Human Rights Conference in Geneva, where the government and NGOs agreed on certain things: first, a "new world order" is more of a "North versus South." The North would dictate what human rights would be, but when it comes to trade they would be free to plunder into the South. So, on that argument there is common agreement among the NGOs and the governments in the South. The other thing is the American occupation of Iraq; a lot of intellectuals in Asia agreed that that was really an unfair game there. You are talking about human rights and yet you are doing these things. What was reported from the West and the East in 1991 was totally different, two different perspectives. Now because of America's problem with China, Clinton did not win the issue of trying to impose human rights standards on China. There are a lot of other things they never take into consideration. ASEAN is sort of on the side of China in that sense.

AF: You don't have to look far for examples of hypocrisy in the U.S. record on human rights, in its own country or in its dealings with other countries in the post-World War II period. In a way, you can agree with rejecting the U.S. stand on human rights because it comes from the U.S. But, it's a kind of ad hominem, or ad nationem, argument. Instead of addressing the issue of whether certain human rights are universal, you say "What right does the U.S. with its own record have to talk about human rights to the Chinese?"

KK-W: I think the discourse on human rights and Asian values has become very unproductive in that way. There is a point in asserting culture in the face of Western hegemony and in the face of the problems of modernization. I think cultural identity is a problem, but it can be a resource, too. The problem is that the "Asian values" debate very often slides into either cultural defensiveness or cultural triumphalism. At that level, vis-à-vis the West, it's unproductive. And within the domestic setting, there is a strange combination of a superficial kind of traditionalism which can be politically used, and a rational instrumentalism, therefore bypassing all the real problems of cultural identity that people are facing as they modernize.

WM: There is one more issue, represented by a particular article, "Clash of Civilizations" written by Samuel Huntington. That really upset Asian intellectuals because Huntington has this idea that the next clash will not be a military clash, but an ideological clash of civilizations among Confucianism and the West and Islam and the West. This just tended to reinforce the notion of Asian values.

AA: It depends on where we start. Because, the West has also been creating a lot of

bugaboos. Perhaps in order to secure itself and to say "Hey, there's no more Cold War, no more Evil Empire, but there's Islamism and Arabism against our partner, Israel." So, it seems like the West is creating its own enemies out of others. The Asians are also impelled to justify, "Look, we have our own culture." And until international gobbledygook proves to be more respectful, the "Asian values" card and Islamism and fundamentalism will always have an interplay. This is the game of the superpowers and we, the less powerful, have to contend with that.

AF: There are some who worry that, with the end of the Cold War and the so-called "triumph" of capitalism and the seeming transition from socialist and communist economies to market economies, cultures in many parts of the world are threatened. And market systems tend to affect culture in dire ways, in more dire ways than other social "-isms."

KK-W: You know, it could be said that really there are only two kinds of limits to capitalism: One is ecological limits and we are seeing that today. The other is moral and sometimes religious. Without these limits, socially created wants would always run ahead of the available means to fulfill them. You can never have enough materially. So, with greater capitalist development in Asia and Southeast Asia, the problem of culture will become more and more important. Because capitalism is corrosive of culture, in the deeper sense. The political authorities want to use culture to support capitalism and, at the same time, say that we can withstand the consequences of capitalism, the ecological and moral consequences. But at some point the contradictions are just too deep.

AF: Do you think this would qualify as what are called "economic rights," "social rights," "community rights"—do you think those are neglected in the universalist paradigm of individual civil liberties, human rights?

WM: No, he's talking more about economic exploitation.

AF: But capitalism in the view of some will somehow lead to development of democracy and human rights. I fail to see the connection myself, but [that view] is espoused.

WM: It's not automatic. Most American economists in the economics textbooks are telling us that economic improvement or development will automatically bring about happiness, income distribution. They say, "You don't have to have a planned economy."

IK: To consider that income distribution is a natural process which is brought about by economic growth doesn't make much sense anymore. To believe that we have to work for growth and that income distribution will take care of itself in the course of time, is not verified by our experiences.

AF: It will always be put off until some future time. But even in very prosperous economies like Singapore and Malaysia, it seems still to be put off. Is that right?

WM: No, I think in our case [Singapore and Malaysia], it's a bit different. If you consider the income of workers in Malaysia, for Malaysian citizens, the pay is relatively high. But then the immigrant workers are down there—they're not even being paid sometimes. The agent or the company holding their passports are taking their money. This owning-of-a-car business—people can have so much, but there are only so many roads. That's why you have all these traffic jams in Bangkok and Jakarta, because of personal ownership of cars. This shows how there is a contradiction within itself.

AF [to KK-W]: It's like what you were saying about the natural limits of capitalism; in the environment you just can't have an unlimited number of cars. Or, you can't mine natural resources sustainably forever.

WM: But the logic of capitalism is that you have to keep on producing. Because, for instance, if you produce a shoe that lasts two years, that's very bad for capitalism, it's better to have a shoe that only lasts six months, so people will buy more, and so that the workers won't be out of a job.

KK-W: I think that countries within the Asian region that have moved up the development ladder, right now to sustain the way of life of their development they depend a lot on foreign labor. In Malaysia and Singapore we have the workers from Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and India. And one problem is whether these workers are invisible in the minds of our citizens, because "they" are not like "us," and because they are serving us.

AF: The best example in Asia is Japan. A model of incorporating outside workers but failing to recognize them.

WM: But I think in Japan the number is like 300,000 as compared to 100 million population. And that is a big issue here. In Malaysia, you have immigrant workers that are 10 percent of the population. Even in Singapore it's about 10 percent of the population. Here in Japan hardly 1 percent.

IK: The immigrant workers represent only part of the problem of internationalization of capital, market and labor, which makes the choices for a welfare state more difficult than before. This is the case because welfare states can only work where capital and labor are not mobile, unlike internationalized flow of capital and labor where each can move freely, which seems more promising in terms of profit (for the employers) and wages (for the workers).

WM: But this is a flaw in the Asian values thing. You're talking about Asian values, but you're exploiting your fellow Asians! This issue was never raised. But it has become a big issue [among] the citizens, because there are two classes of citizens in each country, like in Singapore and Indonesia. The other class is not entitled to medical care, education—they're not entitled to all those things, yet they are the ones working. You're talking about human rights, but the basic things like health care and education you're not even going to give to these people.

AF: What about talking in regional terms about the issues that have been raised? Take ASEAN, for instance, or Burma, Cambodia, or Indonesia, the most obvious examples. The model is that each state has the right to decide its own political culture and determine its own values and no neighbor, no outsider has the right to intervene in that process. But, that would seem to break down. Political and economic cooperation would seem to enforce some sort of recognition of rights of the people in each country from exploitation by their own governments. But here's where the Asian values argument is most stridently used. "Democracy doesn't have only one form, we have the right to decide our own form of government, etc." How does this argument play out in the regional context?

AA: It seems that with the way the Malaysian government allowed groups to disrupt the conference on East Timor, out of "love" for the Indonesian government, and the way the Philippine government rejected the coming of Jose Ramos Horta, it seems that ASEAN is really trying to help one another in order to put up a solid plank of Asian culture, Asian solidarity, and logically, Asian values.

But it's also true that the inter-state articulators are united. The ones trying to challenge the certitude and morality of this type of ideology are also the network of NGOs—they're the ones challenging this. And the NGOs are no less Asian for that matter. They are articulating the opposite of the voice of the powerful to protect one another. So the debate will have to go on and many people in the region, the more articulate ones, who are linked up with the rest of the world, will have to counter this hegemonic beautiful slogan of "harmony among neighbors." But the government will have to articulate its own position. Maybe we can't blame them for being responsible to the citizens. But since I believe in a dialectical dynamism of society, the people will also have to bear the responsibility to mold their own governments. If we in the Philippines will be so subservient to our president, and if we allow him to change the charter so he can run for re-election and maintain his presidency beyond the legal limits, then we will just allow this government to be a good neighbor to Soeharto, to Mahathir. The Filipinos would be also responsible allowing such a president to represent us. I wouldn't blame that leader so much because there are people who are really enabling him to do such things. The NGOs, the peoples' organizations—the rebels included—should keep on the struggle.

IK: Making use of "more objective" arguments, by saying that while we have our own political culture, our own values, but all these cultural values are not immune

from economic and political development. So, development, let's say in the last thirty years, has brought about cultural changes with it. We have to deal with these changes and take them into consideration. This is one of our arguments, going along the lines of economic development.

AF [to KK-W]: As you said, this kind of nostalgia—or cultural traditionalism—is sometimes evoked. Things have changed so much that what you're now calling traditional values have long since been supplanted.

KK-W: I've learned very much from my Southeast Asian fellows, but there's one line from Ignas which I love very much, which is: "The important thing about Asian values is not that they are Asian, but that they are values." If we pay attention not to the Asianness of the values, but to exactly what those values are about, I think we can push for a new level of discourse about culture, identity, and values. When you look at someone like Aung San Suu Kyi, who speaks not just about an abstract concept of human rights, but about Buddhist conceptions concerning life and human existence, it's something that, even if you come from another religious tradition, you can relate to. That's where the discourse can take place, as Arnold said, on the people-to-people level. Whereas on the government-to-government level, you can always expect the discourse to be ideologically motivated.

AF: So, it's a process then of civil society, or people at the civil level finding a kind of unforced consensus?

KK-W: Since you brought up this idea of civil society and Manan said something about the new middle classes and Arnold talked about the NGOs, I would like to raise this view. There is a theory that with capitalism and the growth of the middle classes, you will have the growth of civil society. Now, for me, it's not automatic. Because the members of the middle classes are beneficiaries of economic growth under conditions of political stability, they themselves could go in the other direction, which is to privatize themselves even more. Retreat into their own private world of consumption, especially globalized consumption. And self-indulgence.

AA: Self-indulgence. It seems to be happening in Japanese society.

KK-W: Speaking from the Singapore background, that could retard the growth of civil society.

AF: You think that's happening in Singapore?

KK-W: I think it's happening. What would make the difference is commitment on the part of people to values that are higher and deeper, rather than just economic growth and consumerism. So that they can conceptualize and articulate another set of values.

AF: Do you think that religion, then, plays a central role in providing those kinds of values, some kind of meaning beyond pure consumerism?

KK-W: I think religion can provide deep spiritual resources for the articulation of meaning. But we must always beware: there is religion and there is religion.

AF: Because it can always be exploited.

KK-W: This is why, when it comes down to it, you still need a critical outlook.

IK: What we can use is the secular, cultural argument. This is something we're doing right now in Indonesia: we're saying that economic development is cultural development at the level of its material base. The question is whether or not improvement of the material means of culture can bring something new—new interactions, new ways of looking at things. Having two or three cars is fine, but this brings about new ways of interaction, new ways of . . .

AF: If I'm hearing you correctly, I'm hearing more a hope for people working at the level of NGOs, social activists, than for intellectuals, people who seem to have been co-opted in the societies we're talking about. Is there a kind of bankruptcy in the academic sphere?

WM: This is where we define the intelligentsia or the intellectuals. There are those who have been co-opted, one is in the government, they become bureaucrats. The other is the so-called think-tanks, government or private. The think-tank, despite its role of being supportive of the state and the powers that be, has room for some improvement. Because through the think tanks you can have a lot of access to information, which can be passed to the NGOs for proper action. Academia is where I don't see much role in social movements. They are tied up with a lot of work and all these things. But then they can be one link outside also, if they are really dedicated. But at present most academics, except in Thailand, are rather contented with what they have—high salaries, especially in Malaysia and Singapore. They tend to give papers here and there and give a kind of analysis of the situation.

AF: In Singapore they're very much monitored. There's a kind of atmosphere of fear in academic circles, isn't there? If you publish an editorial that's considered to be critical of the government, you can lose your job.

KK-W: I would try to push for a deeper analysis of that kind of situation in Singapore. You see, sometimes it's good not to keep blaming the state. When intellectuals and academics have all kinds of fears, imagine all kinds of fears, and when they themselves have not developed a coherent vision, or view, or line of analysis, and are not offering it to the public, they are letting the state become

stronger by default. At the same time they blame the state for making them fear it. So the problem of Singapore is not so much censorship as self-censorship. I don't think Singaporean intellectuals should fear all kinds of negative consequences if they themselves have a point of view which they develop and can offer to the public. There are certainly ways of bringing these ideas into public discourse. The challenge in Singapore is not to confuse the distinctions between citizenship, party, and government and nation. If you confuse all these things and lump them together, to be a citizen means to be supportive of the party, and the ruling party is the government, and all these three define the nation. Then if you're critical, you're being disloyal. That's very bad. You can argue the other way around, that people who are critical care and because they care, they're willing to spend the time and energy to find alternative ways of looking at things.

AA: The Philippines seems to be the freest in having this atmosphere of freedom. But on the other hand, this democratic space for academics in the academe, in mass media, is not really doing too well for national or cultural or even individual advancement intellectually. Because in academe what happens more often than not, because of the low salaries in Manila, the scholars try to do as much as they can to advance their career within the academic ladder. Of course there are a few who are interlinked with the media and the NGOs and they are the ones more stimulating as they are more stimulated by their activity. But the democratic space seems not to be very fertile for most people, because it only allows people to have the room to talk without having the responsibility of trying to find out the logic and validity of what they're saying. Anybody can talk, because they're free. Anybody can write for mass media, because there are a lot of newspapers. In this interplay of so many, many are somehow drowned out.

AF: That's interesting, because it's also a criticism of the Western paradigm of human rights, which is to see freedom as a kind of end in and of itself . . . As you say, even in the Philippines, where there's freedom of expression, it doesn't seem to bring much value in other domains.

AA: And I'll even push it further by saying that of all countries in Southeast Asia, the Philippines is one of the poorest and culturally it's one of the most diffuse. One could hardly speak of a national culture that gives cohesion. Although I'm in the forefront of talking of "commonalities" of "interregional resonance," I'm actually doing it out of a sense of adventure. I'm trying to establish a voice that would somehow underpin a nation.

AF: Yes, but some would say if you compare it to Indonesia where a national model is so much imposed on everybody, all the different groups, maybe it's better to have a looser system than a tight one that's forced on you.

AA: Maybe.

WM: It's what Lee Kwan Yew was saying, "The Philippines, they're free, but where are they now?"

AF: People say the same thing about India, too: "The largest democracy in the world, but look at it—a mess."

AA: But, personally, despite all the defects of the Philippines, I would rather live in the Philippines.

MARIKO OKA-FUKUROI (Director, Intellectual Exchange Division, Japan Foundation Asia Center): Regarding Eastern values and Western science, technology plays a rather universal role. It can be a tool to examine modernization, the problem of modernity in the West or Japan. For example, the development of printing technology or the media is a strong tool to understand the problems of modernity. That idea of simple dichotomy comes from the Meiji era, when we were trying to import Western culture. Japanese don't want to lose their identity, they just want to borrow the technology. But there should be values in Western civilization and also in Asia.

Maybe we are going beyond the postmodern period. But in the Asian case, modernization and the postmodernity come in different sequences. Do you witness the postmodernity phenomenon in your Asian countries, or is there any feeling that postmodernity can be a problem for your societies?

AA: Let me answer that, because I've been a critic of the postmodern in the University of the Philippines. I actually call it a neo-colonial discourse, in the way it is practiced. It is not a criticism of postmodernity, because it is a phenomenon world-wide. But the way it is used in Manila, for instance, is a way by which it becomes very self-indulgent. Instead of looking at it as a living dynamism in society, they get it artificially from a book. So that in the name of postmodernity a friend of mine would talk about the "gay discourse." But this "gay discourse," as he presents it, is so much taken from the U.S. postmodern catalogue of books. He doesn't look into the experience of the gays in the Philippines. But because there is a "valid" postmodern discourse, then he comes out triumphantly with "I am postmodern. I have a validity in the Philippines." And he even comes out saying that "Since I am in the gay discourse, I don't have to bother about the nation." His search for gender orientation excuses him from searching his unity and his living links with the national polity. So, in the Philippines at least, postmodernity is chicken shit; the shit of an American chicken. It isn't even a chicken of the Philippines. I am very much a critic of that. They sometimes classify me as postmodern. And so it becomes so ironic, why don't you just judge me the way I produce these articulations, these analyses and then analyze me for what I am? Don't judge my work according to postmodern labels and equations. But, they do that. "Oh, Arnold is using a language that is not New York or British, because in the postmodern discourse he is trying to

appropriate that voice." So, they try to understand me only through that and not through an authentic link between my words and the Philippine experience. It is whether my words reflect the postmodern text. That is the danger.

KK-W: I think we should make a distinction between "postmodernism" and conditions of "postmodernity." There are many kinds of postmodernism, of which some aspects are very problematic for me because very often they are not concerned with real life, politics, and economics, for instance. But conditions of postmodernity I think are important and I would characterize the present as the intertwining of conditions of tradition, modernity, and postmodernity. I think one of the features is what's called by David Harvey "time-space compression," the compression of time and space. This is linked to very concrete conditions of the information revolution and also the globalization of market capital, labor, and culture. So, with the Internet, MTV, and so on, we have to figure into our analysis a recognition that these conditions are coming into our societies: how do we find an intellectual response to them?

Coming back to the question of Asian values, the reason why the Asian values discourse can take place is also very postmodern. Because it is a kind of abstract culture that pretends to be civilizational. Asia now becomes a civilizational entity. That is what we call globalized culture. It adds on to all the other globalized cultures. This becomes an addition to the many signs floating around, like "the West," which people identify superficially. Conditions of postmodernity have to be met with a vigorous intellectual response.

IK: The way we are faced with postmodernity in Indonesia has less to do with probing intellectual validity than with making use of some of its arguments in order to have more political tools or to give more cultural relevance to some issues. The example is perhaps a plural model of living or thinking for the country. It emphasizes that there is more to hope for if we have different peoples living together, than to have one big monolithic society with one goal.

AF: Indonesian political culture is traditionally characterized by harmony. But postmodernity seems to consist of cultural elements being placed randomly without any sense of solidarity or cohesion.

IK: Right. So what is underscored is the right to differ. But, intellectually speaking, we have our own very big objection to this argument of difference, because if everybody has his/her own different stance, you get people saying, "Let us live in peace. Just because you are pro-democracy and I am anti-democracy, we are just different in that regard." To some extent this has become its own contradiction. So we tell the young people, who are enthusiastic about all these things, "At some point postmodernistic thinking can become nonproductive in a political struggle."

The second thing is thinking about construction and deconstruction. This we can make use of productively in our political struggle by saying that all these cultural

things are the result of our own construction. So we have to see if we have constructed it rightly or wrongly.

But let me say something about your question about technology, since we are dealing with high technology as implemented by Minister Habibie now. I think most intellectuals are against these nuclear plants in Central Java and the arguments are quite various. My own view is that sociologically speaking, the higher the technology, the smaller the tolerable margin of error. In the case of nuclear technology, the margin must be close to zero. So our argument is that perhaps the whole scientific and technological equipment is there and perhaps also the Indonesian engineers have the necessary knowledge to build this sort of nuclear plant. But what we are lacking is a social discipline within our own culture. We cannot support or secure this very risky technology.

WM: We've had this big debate in Malaysia about science and technology. Technology is very biased, technology is not neutral. I'll give an example: a gun. A gun is invented to kill people; you don't use it to kill chickens. So, having a gun, there is a purpose. So, whatever its purpose—I say the purpose is to make profit. Profit for you or for us. But science is more neutral, because orderly observation of things, of the world, is more objective.

"Modernization" in Southeast Asia is actually more "industrialization." Modernization includes many more things, not just physical development. So society might achieve a "post-industrialist" stage. That's where Japan is.

It's difficult to talk about this postmodernism stuff, because it's more in the arts, literature. But post-industrialization we can talk about because it's gone beyond national capital. It's more global capital now, it's more within the realm of the WTO, because the transnational companies now have a passport as a state now. Mitsubishi is equivalent to the Philippines or Malaysia; whenever they go anywhere, they can negotiate at the same level as a nation. That is what worries a lot of people, the coming of European, American, Japanese multinationals behaving like another state.

AF: And without accountability. Nobody elects them.

IK: We have the same idea in Indonesia and we put it very concretely in our attempt to deal with the engineers. Our proposition is that technological development is a technological matter. But technological application is a social matter. Because once you apply technology, you apply it only in certain cultures and certain societies, which are never empty of social values. In that sense, technological development and application are a social affair in the first place.

KK-W: I have a few comments on this matter of technology. First is a question of human scale. If technologies erase local particularities and local memories, then you can have a civilization in which the more intimate kinds of identification are gradually being lost. Urbanization in Singapore is such a process, for instance. Second, there is a question of ethical control over technology, especially in the areas

of reproductive technology, life-sustaining technology, or biotechnology. Our technological advancement has run much faster and further than the development of our ethical thinking. Thirdly, if you see electronic technology as a very useful tool, as a means of communication, then with all this expansion of *means* of communication, such as the Internet, what is the cultural *content* that is being offered? This is why the problem of culture becomes more important under such conditions.

I'll give you an example. In Singapore, there are certain restrictions for the Internet. People have to use certain servers, so that the access to certain Web sites, especially pornography, will not be available. Given the present state of the technology, you cannot clamp down completely. So, for me, adding more controls may not be so helpful. Rather, you must have serious, intense cultural development, so that people develop ideas about taste, judgement and cultural content. So cultural development will be very important.

AF: Maybe this is related to what you were saying, that people are overwhelmed by choice. There's too much. Content is so multifarious. This is the postmodern condition. There's no way to judge. It's much bigger than you and your local situation.

KK-W: Right. Technology itself is not a neutral tool, but the sphere of culture could provide the tools for us to judge.

AF: By way of conclusion I will try to summarize some of the main points we touched upon in our discussion of Asian values and development, and especially those on which there seemed to be a sense of agreement.

We talked about how the ideology of economic development in the last several decades has led to distortions in the social and cultural sphere—where values are constantly being redefined and practiced. The fruits of economic development are not equitably enjoyed by all in the booming economies of Southeast Asia and this has led to community struggles for equity that often make recourse to cultural nationalism based on ethnicity or religion and, in reaction, state policies that devalue open debate and discussion under the slogans of "harmony" or "consensus." Disputes over human rights in the region provide a particularly sensitive arena for the employment of arguments based on "Asian values." You all seem to agree that there is a fair degree of hypocrisy or slippery rhetoric at work here.

The human rights proponents from northern hemisphere countries tend to view rights as universals, even though their governments often act in ways that seem to go against those same universal ideals; Southeast Asian leaders have manipulated the slogan of "Asian values" for their own purposes, however, you seemed to say, and often do not apply what would seem to be commonly held Asian values in their own countries. Human rights activists in the region are often caught in the dilemma of rejecting the hegemony of a universalist paradigm enforced from outside, while struggling to get basic rights recognized and enforced in their own societies. And, as Kwok pointed out, the extraordinary rise of market capitalism and economic

prosperity of recent years has brought with it so many radical social changes that it is difficult to know what is left of "traditional" Asian values anyway. What you all agreed was most predominant was the rise of a middle class that is overwhelmingly consumerist in its orientation and basically apathetic politically. Yet you seem to hold out some hope for the middle class's dissatisfaction with politically closed systems eventually bringing about more openness: note the People's Power revolution in the Philippines, or similar tendencies that Ignas sees growing in Indonesia.

All of you seemed to point, too, to the controversial role of intellectuals, academics and NGO leaders in confronting these challenges. With the Indonesian example perhaps the most extreme, you seemed agreed that academics have shirked their duties to analyze the real situation of people—especially the marginalized. Many academics have been co-opted by the rewards of government contracts or mesmerized by academic theory-making. NGOs get higher marks according to you, but still have not quite met the challenge either. In Arnold's view, for instance, NGOs in the Philippines tend not to listen to the real wishes of the communities in whose name they're working, because they are too taken up with their own ideological biases or are too city-focused in their own values.

On balance, though, I sense an attitude of hope in many of your comments, however critical. Kwok seems to think, and I suppose that the rest would agree, that there is the likelihood of a growing role for citizens outside the governmental sector to affect the directions in which your dynamic societies are heading. Ethical values and culture are at the heart of the territory that is being contested, Kwok pointed out, and the long religious and spiritual traditions of the region may prove to be a fertile source for the means to fight for respect of basic human rights and to find more meaning in life than consumerism.

Research Papers

These papers were produced by the fellows during the fellowship period. Dr. Kasian Tejapira's paper is the result of his individual research on "Consuming Thinness: Global Commodities and National Identity," and was submitted in March 1997. The other four papers are discussion papers which illustrate the process of the fellows' collaborative work on the subject of "The Role of Intellectuals" and on the "Follow-up Project."

Consuming Thainess: Global Commodities and National Identity ¹

Kasian Tejapira

Abstract

This research paper considers and analyses the effects of globalized consumerism on Thai national identity or Thainess through a critical reading of print and audio-visual artefacts in contemporary Thai popular culture. The overall effects are conceptualized as four-folded liberation, namely the liberation of consumption from the consumers' own national identity, the liberation of national identity as a signifier from specific national or ethnic commodity-referents, the liberation of brand names from the nationality or ethnicity of commodities, and lastly the liberation of identity from the national. In the analysis of this four-folded liberation, the paper focuses its attention on the complex psycho-cultural negotiation, mediation and mutual transformation between the national identity of Thainess and the overwhelming and unavoidable imperatives of competitive production and consumption of identity commodities in a globalized marketplace. This complex psycho-cultural process is shown to comprise double sublimation i.e. 1) psychological sublimation of un-Thai consuming desires and 2) pseudo-chemical sublimation of Thai national identity. The upshot is that Thainess is reduced to a fossilized and free-floating signifier or symbolic form which any and all commodities, Thai or un-Thai, can freely assume.

1) Introduction

Consumerism Is Not About Material Consumption; Advertising Is Not About Selling Commodities

"Entertainment commodities are constantly consumed in our daily life. In developed countries, entertainment is the fifth basic necessity of life. The entertainment industry is very huge. In this year alone, the total value of the world music industry is estimated to be no less than 800 billion baht."

An executive of Grammy Entertainment Company,
"Chainstore yuk grammy 2000
[Grammy's Chainstores in the Year 2000] "
Phoojatkan Raiwan, 14 November 1994, p.29, 30.

"i am what I buy."

Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen,
Imagologies: Media Philosophy. 1994.

To judge simply by the volume of the capital involved, it can be concluded that the Thai government's so-called "Year to Campaign for Thai Culture" project from 1994 to 1997, the total budget of which amounts to less than 200 million baht, is a mere petty attempt in contrast with the Thai advertising industry whose annual spending on the media is approximately over 30 billion baht.² Therefore, the advertising and entertainment industries in the private sector are the real stage of national culture and consciousness in Thailand, not the government one. Herein lies the real interlocutor that is engaging the Thai public in cultural and psycho-social dialogue day in and day out.

And yet, what conceptual tools are available to the Thai public to interrogate, scrutinize, criticize and talk back to this tidal wave of overwhelming cultural power ?

So far, there are some of them, not many, and grossly inadequate.

Sulak Sivaraksa, a foremost and internationally-renowned social critic, and Rangsana Thanapornpan, a widely-respected professor of economics, different though they are in their opinions regarding the alternatives between globalization and communitarianism, do share a certain consensus on the judgement of consumerism. In his 1994 speech entitled "Globalization and Thai Society and Economy" delivered in memorial to the late Supha Sirimanond, the first Thai intellectual who had published a serious study of Marx's Capital in the 1950s, Rangsana linked consumerism with "cultural imperialism" as follows :

"The dissemination of Anglo-Saxon culture and especially its American version is both rapid and forceful with the international TV broadcasts as its main medium. The influence these TV broadcasts have on the fashion of dress, lifestyles and above all the paradigms of thinking is undeniable.

"The interaction between Thai and foreign cultures amidst Americanization results in the adaptation of Thai culture. Consequently, some parts of Thai culture have improved while others that were not able to withstand the onslaught of foreign culture could not but wither away and be dominated by the latter...

"...Cultural capital is invading Thai society and economy at its weak point, namely the teenagers, by transforming their tastes and beliefs. There is still great room for consumerism to expand." ³ (emphases added)

In the same vein, in an article entitled "Religion and Culture: Crisis and Trends", Sulak called consumerism "a new world religion" and vehemently denounced its impact on Thai society as follows:

"In the old days, religious culture was disseminated through church and temple murals. But nowadays advertising posters are put up everywhere to propagate consumerist culture and the TV screen has become a new pulpit that seduces people into buying what they don't really need. The youth are deluded by consumerism into craving for wearing jeans, eating fast food and drinking fizzy drinks, all of which are the worst of their kinds in the world. Even happiness is turned into a kind of alcoholic drinks and the identity of a distinguished gentleman into a low-quality shirt that doesn't bear comparison with our own native Morhom shirt.

"A lot of prostitutes sell their sex organs just to earn money to afford unnecessary luxuries for their parents who are under the spell of consumerist culture no less than their daughters. And likewise are the educators, intellectuals as well as even some high-ranking monks who earn money by selling amulets and condominiums.

"As prostitutes sell their sex organs to earn money, intellectuals and academics also sell their brains to serve dictatorship. This will go on as long as virtue and ethics is not upheld as a matter of principle.

"If these trends are not diverted, both the poor and the rich, the fools and the intelligent, including even the monks would all succumb to the new religion which is consumerist culture." ⁴ (emphases added)

Please note the underlined terms in the above quotations for they are the keywords that indicate how the two thinkers understand the interaction between consumerist culture on the one hand, and Thai consumers and culture on the other, namely "the influence", "could not but wither away and be dominated", "invading", "transforming their tastes and beliefs", "seduces", "deluded", "under the spell" and "succumb to", etc.

I would like to conclude that theirs is the domination-centered approach to cross-national consumerism which emphasizes the moral and ethical aspects of the process and remains bounded within the nation-state framework. This approach does have its own merits and certain role to play especially in condemning cross-national consumerism as an immoral cultural epidemic that plagues the population of a nation from the outside. And yet, it has almost nothing to inform the said victims-cum-consumers of the complex inner workings of this "domination" process, nor enhance their capacity to analyse and criticize it in depth and detail.

A new approach to the study of consumerism in Thailand proposed in this paper starts from a basic premise that turns the terms of the domination-centered analysis around and points up the reverse side of consumerist culture, which is cultural consumption.

The consumption of material products in the globalized market has been transformed by the advertising and entertainment industries into the simultaneous consumption of culture. In essence, the process of consumption going on under consumerism does not consist simply of physical buying, eating, chewing, swallowing, dressing, wearing, using and disposing of material products, but also of cultural signification, transmission, reception, transformation/translation and interpretation of symbolic messages at the same time.

Hence the most important thing being consumed by consumers under consumerism is not the material objects of commodities but the abstract meanings which these commodities have been made to signify by advertising. Only thus can the volume of consumption by the consumers exceed the limits of their physical capacity and biological needs to consume and instead become a function of their potentially infinite psychological desire or eros which goes far beyond the said capacity and needs and can be limited only by the purchasing power of the consumers, be it the real one in the present or the virtual one borrowed from the future by means of credit cards, etc.

Since the main thing being consumed is abstract meanings, those competent to consume them are therefore not brainless automatons remote-controlled by advertising but real people who are capable of thinking, signifying, communicating and thereby of taking part actively in the consumption of meanings under consumerism, including the teenaged ones. It is because they can think for themselves that they have become such active, energetic consumers. Were they mere automatons, they wouldn't be able to do so.

Those abstract meanings or messages for cultural consumption are conveyed by commodities which function as signs signifying them through advertising. Thus the utmost secret of advertising is how to transform the trading of commodities into the trading of signs. In this light, the purchase of commodities by consumers is but the mundane ending of the consumption process whereas the purchase on meanings by commodities as signifying units is its crucial and significant prerequisite.

Therefore, the effective critique of consumerism must aim at the message those commodities attempt to convey rather than the presumed moral or ethical weakness and unpatriotic behaviour of the consumers so as to expand the semiotic space of reinterpretation and create a virtual suspension of time (or non-time as against real

time) for them in the face of the message received from advertising. This critique will provide them with the condition in which they can exercise their own potential and capacity to talk back to the advertised message before making a decision to buy or not to buy its commodified signs.

Consumerism can't be effectively resisted if one takes it to be merely another form of domination from the outside (i.e. outside the consumers or the nation) since ultimately speaking, the workings of consumerism require active and energetic participation of the consumers themselves. In other words, consumerism is something the consumers voluntarily self-commit and thence only they can liberate themselves from it.

The Importance of Consumption in a Globalized Consumerist Society

While the Thai state media still persist in their traditional, conservative, authoritarian, paternalistic attitude towards national culture and language, for example :-

"With regard to various broadcasts, the officials in charge must carefully scrutinize them. In a broadcast interview with any person, if the interviewee's speech is improper, heavily accented or grossly slurred, then the voice should be edited out for it will become a bad example for the public."

Former Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai,
Interview given in the Language Club broadcast
of the Office of the National Culture Commission,
Government House, 20 July 1993.

...the private media, on the contrary, state in one of their advertisement that :-

"Everyone has the equal right to speech."

An advertisement of the Siemens telephone exchange system, Phoojatkan Raiwan, 26 July 1994, p.5.

Or as a private satellite dish company describes its superior services almost unreservedly :-

"...providing you with a feeling of privacy, freedom to choose from a variety of programs without being controlled by any agency."

An advertisement poster put up in an exhibition of the Samart satellite dish company at the Future Park Plaza, Bangkae, Bangkok, 26 June 1994.

There is no need to spell out which agency it means.

Consumption is highly appealing in Thai society because it allows a choice of lifestyles relatively free from state domination and the control of the cultural bureaucratic authorities.⁵ In the market, the consumers can choose to consume a variety of brand name commodities, to give their own personal meanings to them as commodified signs or symbols, without the nagging interference and uninvited moral judgement of those self-proclaimed official cultural arbitrators.

Of course, on the one hand one may say that these consumers fall prey to the seduction of the market. But on the other hand, it is in this market which forms part of civil society that they have the freedom of choice, communication and association with other fellow consumers through the consumption of commodities beyond the watchful eyes of the state.

Be that as it may, the freedom to consume is by no means free for all. An application for membership in this global club of happy-go-lucky consumers-cum-shoppers requires a certain degree of purchasing power. Those without such power are thereby automatically excluded from the market and deprived of the freedom to consume. Instead, they have no choice but to live the life of the repressed under the constant surveillance and control of the state police (in case they attempt shop-lifting) and depend for their livelihood on state welfare whose (dis)services are notorious for its inefficiency and inhumanity.

According to Bauman, all these reflect the tendency of forms of domination in consumerist society to shift from repression to seduction, from policing to public relations, from authority to advertising, and from norm imposition to needs-creation.⁶

Hence the freedom to consume in the market of civil society, in the private world where each individual can invent his/her own subjective meanings and identities through consumption, is bought at a price. Apart from the money price, there is also a political price to pay, that is the tendency of these freewheeling, happy-go-lucky consumers-cum-shoppers to become increasingly depoliticized. Driven by their consuming passion to consume, they tend to desert their civic duty and obligation and remain indifferent to the plight of their poor compatriots outside the market. It goes without saying that, ironically, democratic self-government and all kinds of distracting civic participation in public affairs are the only sort of luxuries they can't afford.

And yet, consumption is not something that one may renounce and walk away from at will. In today's consumerist society, consumption and human beings are so

tangled up that the former has become the inevitable fate of an ever-increasing number of the latter.

In his *"Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts"*, Karl Marx argues that nature is the inorganic body of human beings.⁷ Human beings need nature to provide them not only with the basic necessities of life, but also with the materials and condition for the development, flourishing and flowering of their far-reaching and unfathomable wonderful potential. To put it simply, without natural sound there would have been no music and Beethoven, without natural colour there would have been no colour paintings and Vincent Van Gogh, without the natural way of things there would have been no Taoism and Lao Tzu, etc. In that sense, nature is the cultural, spiritual and existential interlocutor of humanity. In this dialogue, both are mutually transformed by each other. Human beings have adapted themselves to the evolution of nature and nature has also been changed by human beings into humanized nature with ineradicable human traces.

The problem is:- what has happened to nature or the interlocutor of human beings in the age of global capitalism ?

Immanuel Wallerstein, the internationally-acclaimed founder of world-systems theory, has named a chapter in his book entitled Historical Capitalism (1983) as "The Commodification of Everything: Production of Capital".⁸ This can be taken as the answer to the above problem as "everything" naturally includes nature.

In the present, the particular nature co-existing and conversing with humanity has already been transformed by capitalism. It is no longer pure and pristine nature untampered by human beings, waiting there ready for them to go back to at any time. It has become commodified nature or the world of commodities for the purpose of universal consumption. As a result, the main mode of interaction between human beings and commodified nature is no longer production. Technological advance, robots, automatic production have changed the main economic problem from "how to solve the scarcity of products ?" to "how to manage surplus production ?". Consumerist consumption has now become the paradigmatic answer to the new problem as well as the main mode of interaction between humanity and commodified nature.

Individual needs, be it the need for personal freedom, the need to define the meaning of one's own life, to lead a life according to that self-defined meaning, and to raise oneself to the level of perfect human beings or even that of superman, have all been transformed/translated into the needs for possession and consumption of commodities in the market. So, those who are excluded from the market due to their

deficiency in purchasing power have lost not only the opportunity to consume but also the essential condition to develop their potential as human beings. Suffice it to say that, in consumerist society, societal conditions have turned out in such a way that those who do not consume cannot be a full-fledged human being.

Semiotics As a Tool to Read Consumerist Culture

"Even happiness is turned into a kind of alcoholic drinks and the identity of a distinguished gentleman into a low-quality shirt that doesn't bear comparison with our own native Morhom shirt."

Sulak Sivaraksa ⁹

"Words that almost have meanings for children such as love, warmth have all been sold out. Love turns into milk in advertisement, and warmth into a toy. Children become confused as to what these words really mean. Adults too can't tell what they mean because they themselves have been searching for their meanings for so long and they don't know."

Todd Thongdi ¹⁰

Both foregoing criticisms of consumerist culture/cultural consumption point to the same semiotic phenomena which are brought about by the advertising industry and have become increasingly prevalent in globalized consumerist society i.e. semiotic chaos in which words, meanings and commodities are all jumbled up in the process of communication to such an extent that, to quote Todd again :-

"Children become confused as to what these words really mean..."

"Adults too can't tell what they mean..."

"...because they themselves have been searching for their meanings for so long..."

"...and they don't know."

How, then, has this semiotic chaos come about ?

It happens when the semiotic field (i.e. the sum total of words, signs and symbols) of a given society is bombarded with and overrun by commodities/brand names which come to function as new words, new signs and new symbols, thus interfering and vying with pre-existing words, signs and symbols, occupying, incorporating and transforming their meanings to such an extent that there occurs a

prevalent and chaotic mismatch among words, meanings and things (or signifiers, signifieds and referents for that matter).¹¹

To simplify the matter, let me use a diagram to illustrate an elementary semiotic process. In a society, a word vocally uttered or written in script normally signifies certain abstract meaning(s) in our mind. Therefore, to use the criticisms by Sulak and Todd above as examples, we can construct a diagram as follows:-

<u>WORD or SIGNIFIER</u>	<u>MEANING or SIGNIFIED</u>
"happiness"	[happiness]
"identity of a distinguished gentleman"	[identity of a distinguished gentleman]
"love"	[love]
"warmth"	[warmth]

These words have potent meanings. They are modern "mantras", beloved, cherished and chanted by people in certain culture and society. They can move and motivate those who hear, read, or think of them and enliven their drab, mundane everyday life. Hence, they are signs with cultural value. The secret of advertising is to find ways to transform/translate their cultural value into exchange value or a market price of commodities, thus bypassing the specific and concrete use value of these commodities or, in other words, symbolically dematerializing them altogether. The aim is to move the passion and motivate the action of the target group of consumers so much so that they can't help but open their wallets, take out their banknotes or credit cards, and buy these advertised commodities to consume their cultural value.

The method is to project the commodities or their brand names into the signifier-signified relationships so as to incorporate both the words and meanings and usurp their cultural value as the commodities/brand names' own.

Thus :-

<u>SIGNIFIER</u>	<u>COMMODITY</u>	<u>SIGNIFIED</u>
"happiness"	alcoholic drink	[happiness]
"identity of a distinguished gentleman"	shirt	[identity of a distinguished gentleman]
"love"	milk	[love]
"warmth"	toy	[warmth]

Please note that the upshot of this method is to make commodities function as both signifiers and signifieds, depending on which dyadic relationship is under consideration. So, if this incorporation of signs by commodities is accomplished, then the upshot will be twofold.

First, commodities will then assume the function of signifiers in the sense that whenever the consumers perceive, buy or consume these commodities/brand names, they will immediately think of those signifieds in their mind. Thereby,...

whenever they buy an alcoholic drink of that particular brand name to consume, they will think of [happiness];

whenever they buy a shirt of that particular brand name to wear, they will think of [identity of a distinguished gentleman];

whenever they buy milk of that particular brand name to feed their children, they will think of [love];

and whenever they buy a toy of that particular brand name for their children, they will think of [warmth].

Secondly and simultaneously, commodities will also assume the function of signifieds in the sense that whenever the consumers utter or hear, write or read these signifiers, they will immediately think of those signifieds + commodities/brand names in their mind. Thereby,...

whenever they utter or hear, write or read the signifier "happiness", they will think of [happiness + an alcoholic drink of that particular brand name];

whenever they utter or hear, write or read the signifier "identity of a distinguished gentleman", they will think of [identity of a distinguished gentleman + a shirt of that particular brand name];

whenever they utter or hear, write or read the signifier "love", they will think of [love + milk of that particular brand name];

whenever they utter or hear, write or read the signifier "warmth", they will think of [warmth + a toy of that particular brand name].

So much so that, subjectively speaking, if they do not buy the alcoholic drink of that particular brand name to consume, they will not feel completely happy. If they do not buy the shirt of that particular brand name to wear, they will fall short of the identity of a distinguished gentleman. If they do not buy milk of that particular brand name to feed their children, their parental love of them will be defective. And if they do not buy a toy of that particular brand name for their children, their family ties will soon unravel.

Amidst global cultural flows, the Thai government's "Year to Campaign for Thai Culture" project has played a significant role in augmenting the cultural value of Thainess as a potent sign in Thai society. Precisely because of that, there has been an unprecedented and large-scale incorporation of Thainess by commodities, both Thai and un-Thai, which effectively turns the said project into one of "the Year to Sell Thai Culture".

Next, I will describe, illustrate, analyse and criticize the ongoing process of consuming Thainess in Thai globalized consumerist society.

2) Text

Consumerism versus Nationalism

On Wednesday the 28th April 1993, Phoojatkan Raiwan or Manager Daily, a best-selling Thai-language business daily in Thailand, carried on page 22 a full-page advertisement of *Samakhom Sathapanik Siam Nai Phrabarommarachopatham* or the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage (ASA), announcing its annual seminar for that year on the theme of "*Seubto winyan seubsan wela*" (or "Tradition and Trend" in the Association's own English rendering, although a more literal translation would be "Carry on the Spirit, Move on with the Times") to be held in the Plenary Hall at Queen Sirikit National Convention Center from April 30 to May 3. The advertisement itself featured a photograph of an attractive young Thai lady elegantly dressed in a business suit. Slouching at ease in an armchair and looking

intently even invitingly at her supposed viewers, she was surrounded all over by several graphic pointers with English captions revealing the un-Thai identity of various parts of her bodywear, namely, a hairstyle with a "Parisian Touch", "Italian Import(ed)" ear-rings, "American Fragrance", a suit of "English Wool", a "Swiss Made" watch, and "Japanese Silk" stockings. A big caption near the top right angle of the photograph asks straightforwardly in Thai: "*Bok dai mai khun pen thai thi trong nai ?*" ("Can you tell which part of you makes you Thai?").

But actually who were the "you" being asked? And whose image of consumption of un-Thai commodities was being looked at for that matter? Was it the image of the lady in the photograph or that of her viewers? Through her reflective gaze, the viewers were enticed to look with unexpected and growing unease at her image as evidence of their own possible un-Thainess, their imagined communion with her being grounded on the common challengeability of their Thai identity. For once, the voyeurs themselves were subjected to ethnic self-voyeurism.

But not for long. The lengthy caption beneath the photograph rushed to relieve the viewers of the troubling, incipient self-doubt about their own national identity with a quick-fix soothing message in Thai:

"It's not strange if we are used to bread and coffee more than rice with curry...There's nothing wrong with the fact that we are dressed in Western style. It's not unusual that we drive Japanese cars. Because Thai-Thai feelings still remain in our spirit...That's why ARCHITECT'93 summons up the meaning of Thai style of living again by presenting contemporary architectural ideas that are consonant with the Thai way of life in an attempt to stimulate ties between modern living and Thai identity under the theme "Carry on the Spirit, Move on with the Times" (Tradition & Trend) in order to preserve Thainess." (my own translation, emphases added) ¹²

Without pausing to elaborate on what "Thai-Thai feelings", "Thai style of living", "Thai way of life", "Thai identity" and "Thainess" were, the ad hurried along to invite architects and the public from all over to the seminar to learn and exchange ideas so as to formulate "the concept of a unique contemporary Thai architecture". Ironically, the highlight of this mission in search of contemporary Thai architectural identity turned out to be an introductory speech on "present day new concepts (sic)" by a "world renowned Japanese architect, Mr Fumihiko Maki" (emphasis added). The ad then ended with an assuring note: "And we who are called "Thais".....will not be "Thai" by name only." ¹³

The presumption that Thainess and the consumption of un-Thai commodities could coexist without qualms or dissonance, the fact that Thai architects these days

could begin to discuss contemporary Thai architecture only after hearing words of wisdom from their Japanese counterpart, etc., these stand in stark contrast to Thainess of yesteryear when the burgeoning nationalist, democratic university student movement launched an effective and influential campaign of boycott against Japanese goods in the early 1970s. Being then in high school, I was shown by one of my classmates (whose Thai name, by the way, happened to be *Ekkaraj*, meaning Independence) a newspaper clipping of a contemporary Thai poem which ingeniously contained many familiar and popular brand names of Japanese consumer products in the Thai market, wittily rhymed them with Thai words, and hilariously poked fun at the way Thai people unceasingly and unthinkingly pursued the consumption of these Japanese goods in their daily lives. The poem left such a profound impression on me that, twenty years afterwards, having been through one massacre in Thammasat University, one failed guerrilla warfare in the jungles of northeast Thailand and Cambodia, one doctoral thesis at Cornell, and another recent mass uprising in the middle of Bangkok, and having completely forgotten all the details of its reference save a vague idea of its cultural-political whereabouts, I still could recite its first and final rhyming couplets without fail.

Needless to say, it was the lady with un-Thai bodywear in the above-mentioned ad who reminded me most strongly of that poem. Having heard me lament for it and recite some of its couplets in a public lecture in January 1994, a bohemian friend of mine among the audience called on me at my office the following day and handed me a copy of the complete text of the poem in his own handwriting, saying he had first found it quoted in full in a newspaper article about eleven years earlier (i.e. in 1983) and liked it so much that he copied it down instantly and had kept it ever since. And here is the full text of that poem entitled "*Khaniyom*" ("Values"), written by a virtually unknown Mr Sakda Jintanawijit:

*First thing in the morning,
grasp White Lion toothpaste and enjoy brushing teeth;
then make some tea with a National electric kettle
and smooth down hair with Tanjo pomade.*

*Put on Thaitorae Tetoron clothes,
wear a Seiko watch when leave home,
listen to government news broadcasts on a Sanyo radio,
drive a Toyota to pick up girlfriend.*

*Wonder where to do luxurious shopping ?
Go to Daimaru where there are plenty
of consumer products made in Japan,*

sent here from faraway Nippon.

*Girlfriend buys Kanebo cosmetics
and also those of Sisedo and Pola,
Wacoal underwear for her big boobs,
Onkyo electric appliances for her ecstasy.*

*When back at home, switch on a Toshiba TV set,
flip through the channels looking for Gamo and Kendo.¹⁴
But after fighting mosquitoes for a while,
feel like visiting Saburi massage parlour.¹⁵*

*In our modern daily life,
we begin to have self-doubt
so we ask an Asahi mirror:
"Eh, am I a Thai ?"
("Watachiwa thai yen deseuka ?")¹⁶*

To this soul-searching, nationalist question self-reflectively and rhymingly posed by a Thai consumer of Japanese goods twenty-one years earlier, the resounding answer unhesitatingly and unrhymingly proffered by a Thai consumer of un-Thai commodities today is emphatically: "Yes, I am a Thai despite my consumption of many an un-Thai thing!"

Between the nationalism-above-consumerism of the 1972 "*Khaniyom*" poem and the consumerism-above-nationalism of the 1993 ASA's advertisement lay a text which most aptly captured the increasing commodification and de-referentialization of the Thai signifier, namely, a Thai folk-song with the English title of "*Made in Thailand*", composed and played by a highly popular folk-song group named Carabao in 1984. Owing to its economic nationalist message, the song won government approval and promotion and quickly became a top hit. And yet, the jacket of the Carabao cassette tape that featured this song bore a widely recognizable trademark of the Coke soft drink in red and straightforwardly declared in print the following assuring message:

"Coke and Carabao jointly promote the value of Thainess" !?!¹⁷

Freedom of Consumption and Liberation of National Identity

I would argue that this affirmative answer signifies, in present-day Thailand, manifold cultural liberation from the nationalist regimes of the past, be it radical leftist or right-wing authoritarian. On the one hand, it is the liberation of consumption in

which the consumption of commodities is no longer limited or constrained by the consumers' own national identity. One can consume commodities of whatever nationality or ethnicity regardless of one's own national identity with no nationalist angst, guilt or remorse. Or, to parody a well-known *cri d' extase a la* the American civil rights movement of the 1960s, the Thai consumers are now "free, free at last !" (to consume whatever they desire).

But it also suggests, on the other hand, the liberation of national identity as signifier from the control of specific national or ethnic commodity-referents. Thus Thainess becomes unanchored, uprooted, liberated or freed from the regime of reference to national or ethnic Thai commodities. Thainess is now able, as it were, to roam freely around the commodified globe, to coexist and copulate with Italian earrings, American fragrance, English wool, a Swiss-made watch, Seiko, Sanyo, Toyota, Wacoal, etc. or any other un-Thai commodities and sundries, and still to refer as such to the consumer of these products. Its referential essence is limited to mere spectral, amorphous, uncorporeal, intangible, hollowed-out and undefined Thai-Thai feelings in the spirit. Once liberated, Thainess takes wing and turns into a freewheeling, free-floating signifier.

Would A Rose, By Any Other Brand Names, Smell As Sweet ?

And yet, come to think of it, on the third hand (the pomo world is such a complex place and we have only two hands), is it the products themselves or their representations i.e. brand names, that are at issue here ? From the point of view of our lady with un-Thai bodywear and her fellow consuming compatriots, will it still be "not strange", "not wrong" or "not unusual" if the brand names of those bread and coffee as well as Western dresses and Japanese cars which they consume daily are changed from fashionable foreign to commonplace Thai ones (for example, from Sony to Seni, or from Hitachi to Hatthachai) ? Or, if Thai products assume exotic foreign brand names or even generic names, will they become more or less palatable to the Thai national spirit ?

Numerous examples spring to mind in this connection. For instance, not long ago, the Thai manufacturer of a popular but controversial stimulant drink called *Krating Daeng* (meaning Red Bull) has marketed a new line of product which is a sterilized refreshing tissue under the English brand name of Red Bull. Also, during the annual Chinese Buddhist *kin je* (a Thai term for going vegetarian) festival in October 1994, a long-established Thai manufacturer of a variety of canned food products bearing the *Tra nok phirab* (or Pigeon Brand) trademark has launched canned, ready-cooked Chinese vegetarian food under the brand name of J-Foods, which is a fantastic linguistic hybrid consisting of the abbreviated English transliteration of a Thai word

whose origin is Teochiu Chinese plus an English word.¹⁸ In addition, there are Regency brandy, Cute Press and Oriental Princess cosmetics, etc. all locally produced by Thai manufacturers. As to generic names, during the 1994 Chinese lunar festival, the traditional Chinese cakes seasonally made and consumed at that time whose generic name in Thai is *khanom wai prajan*, have been widely advertised for the first time ever in Thailand as simply moon cake.

The foregoing questions are posed against the background of a distinct and growing trend among Thai business companies, manufactured products, film and TV stars, singers, musicians and entertainers to adopt foreign (that is, Western and Chinese) names, brand names or stage names.¹⁹ This is readily understandable in case of those companies, products and individuals that plan to go global and are targeted at foreign export market. But even when they are clearly for domestic consumption, foreign names are still widely adopted. Thus, most shopping centers in Bangkok and major provinces in Thailand now have such names as Central, The Mall, Robinson, Pata, Welco, Wonder, Safco, Cathay, etc.; the bigger and better-known among Thai companies adopt such names as Telecom Asia, Jasmine International, Bangkok Land and Houses, IBC, Thai Sky TV, Media of Medias, etc.; and singers of Thai songs call themselves with such foreign-sounding stage names as Tik Chiro, Chen Chen Bunsungnoen, Honey Sri-isan, etc.²⁰ As for business establishments with original names in Thai, a convenient ploy is to use the abbreviations of their English transliterations along with them. Hence, DK for Duang Kamol Bookstore, MBK for Mabunghrong Shopping Center, CP for the Charoen Phokphand Group. Interestingly, the nominal metamorphosis of the Charoen Phokphand multinational conglomerate from Chia Tai through Charoen Phokphand into CP is indicative of the cultural and economic transformations of Sino-Thai businesses in general.²¹

The reason for this, as told by Mr Thiraphol Phongphana-ngam, the general manager of a newly-opened Thai fast-seafood restaurant located in the midst of cutthroat competition from nearby McDonald's, Popeye's, Kentucky Fried Chicken franchised fast-food restaurants and the like in a huge shopping mall in an affluent residential area in Bangkok, is presumably fairly typical. Here he explained why, having gone and pondered over more than 200 possible names, he finally chose to name his restaurant in English as Calico Jack:

"Although we set up our restaurant for Thai customers, it would be risky to use a Thai name. That's why we decided to use an English name in order to create an inter (sic) image as well as to compete with ourselves." (my own translation) ²²

The last part of the final sentence in Mr Thiraphol's statement is worth pondering. So, in order "to compete with ourselves" or, in other words, to drive our

Thai selves harder, we need an inter(national) image created by a foreign brand name to prod us and prick our Thai conscience. Thus, in the case of Calico Jack, what remains of Thainess (the Thai id) is being contested right there in its last refuge in the psyche by the more competitive and dynamic un-Thai superego and, hopefully, will be overcome someday .

Adoption of foreign brand names by Thai products aside, it has become increasingly difficult and even pointless to try to determine the Thai/un-Thai nationality of a consumer product in the Thai market through its original brand name in this present age of economic globalization. As it is now "possible, according to Milton Friedman, to produce a product anywhere, using resources from anywhere, by a company located anywhere, to be sold anywhere," so, unsurprisingly, Thailand has become, in recent years, a favourite overseas investment site and production base for export of many a Japanese, Asian Nics' and Western multinational corporation, owing to its comparatively lower labour costs and strategic geo-economic location as a gateway to Indochina and South China.²³ Therefore, not only Toyota but also Mitsubishi, Isuzu, Honda, Nissan, Volvo, BMW, etc. cars, not only National but also Sony, Sharp, Sanyo, Saijo Denki, Nordmende, etc. electric appliances are now being manufactured and/or assembled in Thailand by Thai workers and technicians with increasing local contents. In this strictly economic sense, be it with regard to the production site, manufacturing labour, component parts, export earnings and balance of trade, these products are already getting more and more Thai despite their foreign brand names. Consequently, what is actually liberated to copulate with Thainess may not be so much the products themselves as their foreign representations or brand names.

Freedom from Thainess

The liberation of consumption, national identity, and brand names leads to the next logical step i.e. the liberation of identity from the national. Since the exclusive power of Thainess as a signifier to refer to only Thai things is loosened, the signified of Thainess also changes from the supposed embodiment of the inherent essence of all things Thai into just one identity option among many others, national, ethnic or otherwise, which anyone can partake of and indulge in through the purchase and consumption of commodities as identity signs. To put it another way, the manifold freedom from the barriers imposed by national or ethnic self-identity simultaneously allows Thai consumers the possibility to consume commodities as identity commodities i.e. the consumption of consumer products not for their intrinsic use value or socio-economic exchange value, but for their cultural value as signs of desired identity.²⁴ And the objects of desire in question may vary from national or ethnic to

mere brand-name identities as provocatively and succinctly put by Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen in their recent iconoclastic work:

" i am what I buy. " 25

The Desire to Be Thai in the Age of Globalization

The alienation of Thais from Thainess, the distance they subconsciously assume between themselves and their supposed national/ethnic essence, the manner in which they regard Thainess as other than and separate from their own individual identities and treat it as reified "thingness", are evidently the underlying premises in the following excerpts from the interviews of four rising young stars in the Thai entertainment industry. First, Miss Angkhana Thimdi or simply Ann, a sexy film & TV star, fashion model and occasional singer, well-known for her voluptuous body and often partially and tightly-clad dresses, was reported to have commented on her attitude towards Thainess, just before the New Year's eve and the beginning of the government's designated *Pi ronnarong watthanatham thai* (or Year to Campaign for Thai Culture) of 1994, as follows:

"Does anyone know that, even though she likes to wear extremely provocative dresses, actually Ann-Angkhana Thimdi is very strict in observing Thai traditional customs, to the point of always saying a Buddhist prayer before going to sleep...She also likes to give alms to Buddhist monks regularly. Moreover, she is a very old-fashioned lady who likes to preserve Thainess.... However, that Ann-Angkhana must wear such provocative dresses, says the reporter, is due to the fact that she has a good figure and wants to show off what she has....And having learned a lot about the teachings of Buddha lately, Ann-Angkhana would like to take vows as a Brahmin nun sometime next year. " (my own translation, emphasis added) 26

In the same vein, Mr Billy Ogan, a popular, half-bred, Filipino-Thai, young singer and film & TV star, explained the concept of his new music album in relation to the official Year to Campaign for Thai Culture as follows:

"Although the songs that will be produced are teenage songs, Thai cultural issues will also be stressed. This is because next year will be the Year to Campaign for Thai Culture, therefore, in regard to the new songs, Thai cultural issues must be mixed in. And personally speaking, I also like Thainess a lot but don't have much chance so far to express that. So, when there is a chance of producing songs according to my own ideas, I would like to bring out what I myself am..." (my own translation, emphasis added) 27

And last but not least, Kob - Paphassara Chutanuphong and Tui - Monreudi Yamaphai, two famous leading female TV stars, told a newspaper reporter of their special plan jointly to celebrate the 1995 Saint Valentine's Day in a very Thai-Thai way:

"While most young stars who are in love take today's opportunity (14 Feb.) to celebrate the Valentine's Day or the Day of Love according to Western custom, the young-star couple, Kob - Paphassara Chutanuphong and Tui - Monreudi Yamaphai, choose instead to observe the Thai Buddhist festival of Magha Puja, (a Buddhist festival on the day of the full moon in the third lunar month to commemorate the spontaneous great assembly of the Buddha's disciples-Kasian) which falls on the same date. Kob-Paphassara states that actually she and Tui have already celebrated their Day of Love festival late last year by touring round the U.S. for two full weeks with Tui's elder sister. "Both of us work hard and intend to save ten thousand Baht a month. When October and November come, we will spend our savings on a tour to refresh ourselves. This year, we plan to go to Italy." However, it so happens that this year's Valentine's Day coincides with the Magha Puja Day. So, Kob decides on doing something special even though they have already celebrated the Day of Love. Kob says that on February the 14th, she and Tui will fly to the province of Kalasin to make merit by buying a bookcase for the Tipitaka and Pali texts for a Buddhist temple as well as wearing a white dress and observing the Buddhist precepts in that temple for a day. On the following day, they will come back to work." (my own translation, emphases added) ²⁸

Cultural Schizophrenia

So, professedly, all four of them - Ann, Billy, Kob and Tui, like Thainess, love Thainess, and desire to be Thai, to remain Thai and, better still, to become even more Thai. The actuality even possibility of their professed common desire is premised upon the existence, on the one hand, of Thainess as the object of desire and, on the other hand, of themselves as the subjects of desire. Moreover, in the very act of pursuing their object of desire, the four subjects concurrently reveal a split in their personality and symptoms of cultural schizophrenia. Thus we have, in the case of Miss Thimdi, the presumably un-Thai sexy, exhibitionist Ann and the presumably Thai traditionalist, Buddhist Angkhana. Again, in the case of Mr Ogan, we have Billy, the embodiment of un-Thai teenage fads and Ogan, the lover of Thai culture. And in the case of Ms Chutanuphong and Yamaphai, we have, on the one hand, Kob and Tui, who crave after un-Thai tourist exotica and, on the other hand, Paphassara and Monreudi, who prefer observing Thai Magha Puja to Western Valentine's Day. Their own claims that their Thai self is deeper, truer or more authentic than its un-Thai counterpart can only be taken with a grain of salt, given the context in which the statements were made, namely right before and shortly after the official Year to Campaign for Thai Culture.

Rather, their fragmented subjectivity seems to be flexible artifice selectively and discreetly practised in response to the varying demand of the segmented cultural market in Thailand which include, among others, the government, the Buddhist faithful, teenagers, soft porn fans, etc. None of these market segments is deeper, truer or more authentic than the others. They are just different groups, big and small, of image consumers.

Lest anyone should think that Ann, Billy, Kob and Tui are isolated individual cases, let me introduce further instances of cultural schizophrenia inflicted upon present-day Thailand by the widespread attempt to reconcile the overwhelming undeniability and inevitability of cultural globalization with the nervous desire to hold on to the increasingly elusive and slippery Thainess. Thus, when the 125 students who took the Creative Copywriting class at Ramkhamhaeng University's Department of Advertising and Public Relations were assigned by their instructors to make a one-page ad to instill Thai cultural values into today's youth on the occasion of the Year to Campaign for Thai Culture, the best 20 among them, as picked out by the instructors, include the following samples:

<u>Name of Student</u>	<u>Ad Picture</u>	<u>Ad Message</u>
Maneerat Siriwong	the back view of a boy dressed in the recognizable M-TV black rap-singer style & the front view of supposedly the same boy in a Thai traditional dress performing Thai classical dance	"Rap dance is acceptable but Thai (classical) dance is not forgotten; though not (Thai) on the outside!... but the heart is genuinely Thai"
Phongmethree Saengrit	youths making hand gestures and screaming in a pop concert & soldiers marching under the Thai national flag and the image of a national monument	"The scream in front of a concert stage should not be different from the shout for independence; Although time passes by, "Thainess" still persists, for us to cherish, along with Thai independence."
Jumnanja Punaret		"Many jeans in the market; only one (Raja Pattern dress) in the museum; who will carry on the style of dress which is Thai identity, if not you.."
Tachsanee Wongrach	a jean & a traditional Thai dress for males known as "Raja Pattern" in a showcase	
Sangthian		"Thai-Thai games are still in (my) memory...; Today's world may make great progress but Thainess is never forgotten."
Pongsiam Khumsoithong	a Thai male youth dressed in American teenage style playing skateboard in an urban area	
	a traditional Thai Singha (as in the logo of Singha Beer) & Walt Disney's Lion King	"Thai Singha & Lion King; Do you know the difference ?"
	a 100 Baht banknote over and above a 20 Baht banknote over and above a Thai citizen's ID card	"Thainess is not only..what you carry; Don't let Thai culture..be only an option"

Over and over again, the same symptoms as in the cases of Ann, Billy, Kob and Tui are shown here i.e. a split personality or fragmented subjectivity, be it individual or collective, realistic or symbolic (rap dancer vs Thai dancer, screaming youths vs shouting soldiers, a jean vs a Raja Pattern dress, a skateboard vs Thai-Thai games, Singha vs Lion King); the submersion, subjectification, spiritualization, interiorization of Thainess²⁹ (which is evident in phrases like "Thai (classical) dance is not forgotten", "not (Thai) on the outside, but the heart is genuinely Thai", "Thai-Thai games are still in (my) memory", "but Thainess is never forgotten", "Thainess is not only what you carry");³⁰ the explicit or implicit claim that the interiorized Thai self is more authentic than - or at least none the less authentic despite - the projected un-Thai self in the form of dress, behaviour or activity (thus the Thai classical dance and the genuinely Thai heart are more authentic than the rap dance and rap dress; shouting in a military parade is as authentic as screaming in a pop concert; the singularity and aura of the Raja Pattern specimen in the museum makes it more authentic than the limitlessly reproducible manufactured jeans in the market); and lastly, the irrepressible, ardent, resilient, recurrent and ever-reincarnating desire to be Thai (which is supposed to keep on haunting Thais even when they are rap dancing, screaming in a pop concert, wearing jeans, playing a skateboard or watching a Walt Disney cartoon). Cultural schizophrenia is reaching epidemic proportions in Thailand, or so it seems.³¹

Inhaling Thainess into the Psyche

After solid Thainess has been melted into air or vaporized and then inhaled or spirited into the psyche, it is then purified or purged of any elements deemed unsuitable for the urgent need to survive and succeed in the increasingly competitive economic and cultural environment of globalized Thailand. In the same manner that the manager of Calico Jack had to give his Thai fast-seafood restaurant an un-Thai name so as "to compete with our(Thai)selves", Mr Patrick McGeown, an Australian creative group head of EURO RSCG Ball Partnership (allegedly the seventh largest advertising agency in the world) and one of the two co-instructors who assigned the above-students in their Creative Copywriting class at Ramkhamhaeng University to make ads to instill Thai cultural values, advised his students on Thainess and their future advertising career as follows:

"It's really for the students to think that they are Thai and never forget it. They don't have to drop it when they go into the real world of advertising; it should be something that they should always carry with them. The things that are created in Thailand - when creating an advertisement try to make it Thai, keep it Thai. It doesn't have to be Western; they don't have to copy." (emphases added)³²

That is, inhale Thainess, keep it in the psyche and then proceed to create ads that are "Thai". So far so good. But then, he went on,...

"It's because Thai people have this nature of being kreng jai (i.e. being considerate) and always saying mai pen rai (i.e. never mind). That is why I insist that my students speak up if they don't agree about anything. This is not because I'm trying to change Thai traditional values of always being polite and giving in, but rather I'm doing it to improve the advertising industry, ultimately, by standing up for one's ideas." (emphases added) ³³

And here we have in the same person, on the one hand, Pat, a Siamophile, lover and admirer of Thai culture ("Thailand is rich in culture - so is India - but America and Australia are not.", so he averred), who repeatedly urged his students to "always carry (Thainess) with them" and, on the other hand, Mac, a world-class advertising guru, who regarded *kreng jai* and *mai pen rai* as hindering the improvement of the advertising industry and insisted that his students had to "drop it" and thereby become more "un-Thai"! Alas, this proves that nationality or ethnicity is no immune system against the truly infectious disorder of cultural schizophrenia, induced by the desire to be Thai amidst the un-Thai exigencies of globalization.

The case of Pat Mac offers an interesting contrast to that of Calico Jack. While Calico Jack represents an attempt to become "un-Thai" under an un-Thai sign, Pat Mac makes the clarion call to his students to try desperately to become "un-Thai" in their working style under the sign of "Thainess". One can well imagine, sometime in the near future, one of Pat Mac's former students arguing in a very "un-Thai" style, i.e. forcefully and assertively, without *kreng jai* and *mai pen rai*, with his/her surprised, polite and submissive Thai copywriting colleagues in a world-class advertising agency for his/her own idea of "Thai" ads. I would like to call this process the sublimation (in the psychological sense) of un-Thainess, in which un-Thai urges are expressed under more socially acceptable Thai signs.

Cultural Sublimation: Psychological and Pseudo-chemical

But Thainess is also sublimated, though not in the more familiar psychological sense, but in a sense analogous with the less familiar chemical one. Chemically speaking, "sublimate" is to change a solid substance to a gas by heating it and then change it back to a solid, in order to make it pure. I have already discussed how solid Thainess is melted into air, spirited into the psyche, and then purged or purified of those elements that are not conducive to un-Thai globalization. The last step in the "sublimation" (in the pseudo-chemical sense) of Thainess is to change it back to a solid or solidify it with an image or a sign.

To turn vaporized Thainess into a solid sign or signifier, one needs an appropriate, readily recognizable "Thai" form for it. That form, therefore, has to be old, venerable, immutable and hence, by the same token, rather useless, irrelevant and fossilized in present-day circumstances. Such is the standard form of almost all advertisements, official or private, related to the government's designated Year to Campaign for Thai Culture as well as most public displays and individual expressions on this theme. This can be clearly seen in the Ramkhamhaeng students' Thai-Thai ads above. Most of the signs with which they chose to signify Thainess in their ads are of this character.

For example, television and public ads aside, the Thai traditional dress, the Thai classical dance and the Raja Pattern dress cannot be seen anywhere else but in a museum, theatre, or Buddhist temple on special occasions only. Thai-Thai games are hardly ever played by most urban Thai youths or they have stopped playing them long time ago since their parents took them away from the rural villages. Generally speaking, a singha appears only either on a bottle of Singha Beer or on the logo of the Ministry of the Interior, "the least just and honest government agency", according to the findings of a recent opinion poll commissioned by the Ministry itself.³⁴ Military parades and prowess have become less and less relevant to Thai national security and political stability since the collapse of the Thai communist rural insurgency in the early 1980s, the end of the Cold War at the end of that decade, and the middle-class uprising against military rule in May 1992. As to Thai banknotes and citizen's ID cards, they can of course be found everywhere but have become less of a necessity of late. For those 1,700,000 credit-card holders in Thailand (as of early 1995, with a 42 % annual growth rate), Thai banknotes are indeed rather cumbersome options.³⁵ And unless one needs to deal with government agencies (in which case a citizen's ID card is requisite), credit cards can serve the purpose of self-identification just as well. Actually, it serves that purpose even better in business establishments as it helps identify your class, income, purchasing power, lifestyle, etc., something a simple *citoyen/ne*'s ID card can never do due to its inherent egalitarian ideological bias.

Verbally and articulately symptomatic of the pseudo-chemical sublimation of Thainess is a statement made by Mr Anand Praphaso, on behalf of a group of eight Thai painters named *Klum Nimit* (or The Creation Group), on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition of their collection of paintings called "*Thai Nimit*" ("Thai Creation") at Landmark Plaza Hotel in Bangkok on 17 March 1994. Anand wrote:

"In the age of turbulent cultural currents, no one denies that every Thai has to be able to lead his life amidst the growth and prosperity of a modern society. Every morning, we wake up to find a confusing, chaotic and systematic (sic) way of life in which we cannot afford even a moment of mistake otherwise everything will fail. Modern Thai

society has made us into a heartless robot. People's hearts become hardened day by day. We have no time to review who we are, where we come from. In the future, children will think that a home is a square box, that squids are brown strings, that longans are in cans..

"All of us always accept that the comforts of present-day popular ways of life is a good thing that should not be rejected. But we call on every Thai to spend five or ten minutes daily reviewing one's own role and way of life, asking oneself what we are doing and whether we have forgotten what actually is the meaning of the word "a Thai". Is not it high time that each and everyone of us revived the spirit of being a Thai ? Is not it high time that each and everyone of us refused to lead a life of a brainless robot without any feeling for the spirit of Thainess ?

"The Nimit Group has created the collection of their works of art called "Thai Nimit" in order partly to contribute towards the arousing and awakening of the consciousness of being a Thai so that it may come back in the form of "Thai Mai" ("New Thai"), which is in harmony with modern society. We hope that our collection will contribute towards linking up Thainess with technology unawkwardly. We hope that the children will know what is Thai art, what is a Thai, and that a modern Thai must be "a genuine Thai".

"Every painter of the Nimit Group creates his/her works of art in his/her own style based on a commonly-held concept to present the Thai-Thai way of life so as to communicate the rationale according to his/her own individual character. Therefore, there is no limit as to the techniques and methods of presentation.

"Every painter will project his/her mind into "Thai"-ness in his/her own consciousness and then refine it into a work of art in his/her own individual style. This is our commonly-held concept. Thus, "Thai Nimit" is a diversity in harmony with the spirit of Thainess." (emphases added, my own translation) ³⁶

The news report features a sample of their collective effort to spiritualize, purge, subjectivize, and project Thainess back into a solid image or sign of their desire i.e. a painting of a young Thai male in traditional northern Lanna Thai princely dress with all the awkward trappings of ancient royalty.

Commodities' Penetration of Thainess and Other Nationhoods

Thus, pseudo-chemically sublimated Thainess is returned to us in a solid but useless, irrelevant and fossilized or mummified form right from a temple, theater or museum. And this is as it should be for now that Thainess has been ripped away from

its traditional, historical, theatrical or religious context and deprived of its aura, it becomes an empty shell, a neutral terrain, a free-floating signifier which can be entered into and "exited" at will by commodities of whatever nationality or ethnicity. Thus, apart from Coke - the promoter of the value of Thainess, we have, in this official Year to Campaign for Thai Culture, such Thai-Thai advertising campaigns as "Singha Beer - the pride of the nation",³⁷ "Thai Life Insurance - the life insurance company of, by and for the Thais",³⁸ "Central Department Store - the Thai Store",³⁹ etc.

No matter how spurious their claims to Thainess may be under scrutiny, the fact that these commodities have indeed been turned into signs of Thainess has changed Thainess willy-nilly into one identity option among many others in the free market of a limitless plurality of commodities and/or brand names, in the same sense that Coke is just one option among many other brands of cola, Singha Beer is just one option among many other brands of beer, Thai Life Insurance is just one option among many other life insurance companies, and Central Department Store is just one option among many other department stores. By dint of association with, or signification by commodity signs, Thainess has become, alongside Chineseness, Europeanness, Englishness, etc., another choice among a variety of national/ethnic signifiers to be worn or shed according to the fluctuations of their respective cultural value.

Some more examples will help clarify or perhaps further complicate this point. Daewoo Corporation, a world famous South Korean automobile manufacturer, marketed its Fantasy and Espero sedan models in Thailand under the "Daewoo sells Europeanness" concept in early 1994.⁴⁰ Coca Restaurant, a well-known chain of Teochiu "sukiyaki" restaurants in Bangkok which also bakes and sells Chinese cakes, released a radio spot to advertise its "Coca Moon Cakes" (sic) during the 1994 Chinese lunar festival featuring a bilingual conversation between a mother who speaks Thai and a son who speaks impeccable and fluent American English (with no Thai translation) about "the best moon cake" she wants him to buy for her on this occasion.⁴¹ Lipton, a brand of instant English tea, came up with a TV commercial in which an old bearded Chinese Kung Fu master, when asked by a young disciple as to the secret of serenity, makes him a cup of Lipton tea as the answer.⁴² So here we have Korean cars assuming a European identity, Chinese cakes assuming an American English identity, and English tea assuming a Chinese identity. The perfect illustration of this reduction of stature, uniqueness and aura, or this profanation of nationalities and ethnicities as they become mere commodified identity signs is the following advertisement:

Breakfast: **CHINESE**. Lunch: **FRENCH**. Dinner: **CHINESE**.
Breakfast: **ITALIAN**. Lunch: **CHINESE**. Dinner: **CHINESE**.
Breakfast: **GERMAN**. Lunch: **CHINESE**. Dinner: **JAPANESE**.
Breakfast: **ITALIAN**. Lunch: **CHINESE**. Dinner: **FRENCH**.

Breakfast: **AMERICAN**. Lunch: **ITALIAN**. Dinner: **AMERICAN**.
 Breakfast: **GERMAN**. Lunch: **JAPANESE**. Dinner: **FRENCH**.
 Breakfast: **JAPANESE**. Lunch: **GERMAN**. Dinner: **JAPANESE**.
 Breakfast: **AMERICAN**. Lunch: **CHINESE**. Dinner: **FRENCH**.
 Breakfast: **ITALIAN**. Lunch: **CHINESE**. Dinner: **FRENCH**.
 Breakfast: **GERMAN**. Lunch: **JAPANESE**. Dinner: **AMERICAN**.
 Breakfast: **FRENCH**. Lunch: **CHINESE**. Dinner: **AMERICAN**.
 Breakfast: **CHINESE**. Lunch: **FRENCH**. Dinner: **AMERICAN**.
 Breakfast: **ITALIAN**. Lunch: **CHINESE**. Dinner: **GERMAN**.
 Breakfast: **ITALIAN**. Lunch: **ITALIAN**. Dinner: **FRENCH**
Tired of the same old thing ?

Put some spice into your life.

Tandoor

The Essence of India

Holiday Inn CROWNE PLAZA

For Reservations call 238-4300 ext. 4364 " 43

One may as well say: "*Tired of the same old **Thai** thing ?*"

But, alas, the Tandoor advertisement provides only a horizontal perspective of the profanation of nationalities/ethnicities whereas, apparently, profanation works vertically too. This point is made monetarily plain by the varieties of Chinese moon cakes on sale in Bangkok this year. Looking identical from the outside, these deep brown cubes with Chinese characters imprinted on the top are categorized according to their different inner fillings. And given the increasingly fierce competition in the 400-million Baht worth moon-cake market, their filling categories have been multiplied in recent years from just a few to around a dozen so as to appeal to a wider range of consumer groups. Thus, those with traditional Chinese fillings such as *Ngo Ying* (or Five Kinds of Nuts) cost about 40 - 50 Baht (approximately 2 US\$) each. The ones with Thai-Thai sweetened *Durian* fruit fillings, especially of the famous *Mon Thong* (or Golden Pillow) variety, are priced a little higher at 60 Baht (about 2.50 US\$) each. But the most expensive of them all, fetching about 70 - 80 Baht (or 3 US\$) apiece, contain "American" fillings, with such exotic names as *Khaelifornia* (sic) and *Hawaii*.⁴⁴ While the comparative cultural value of Thainess *vis-a-vis* Chineseness and Americanness in this particular instance is monetarily clear, the definite national/ethnic identity of a *Khaelifornia* or a *Mon Thong* moon cake is much harder to specify. When a greedy buyer munches on it, is it Chineseness, Thainess or Americanness that is being consumed? Seemingly, nationality/ethnicity is now solely and arbitrarily in the eyes of the consumer.⁴⁵

Commodities' Self-Penetration

Nationality and ethnicity having been loosened and unravelled thus far, it is now possible for commodities to take the next logical step i.e. undo their tie with the national altogether and create an identity of their own under the sign of their respective brand name. The following are a few examples of commodity-constituted identity being offered for prospective identity consumers to hold onto and identify themselves with amidst the flux of globalized commodity consumption.

-Carlsberg Beer presents itself to Thai consumers as the globalized beer with the slogan "the same taste all over the world", offering an imaginary worldwide identity and community of Carlsberg Beer drinkers that cut across all geopolitical barriers and cultural differences, against the Thainess advertising campaign of Singha Beer.⁴⁶

-Tri Petch Isuzu Sales Co., Ltd. presents a sports utility vehicle imported from Japan as the identity sign of its prospective buyers in these words:

*"You've reached the top: it's up to you to make the big decisions, the ones that count. Your achievement is the realization of everything that people think of when they hear the word success, and your position is one that everyone aspires to attain some day. Now your life is full of new and bigger challenges. And when you move out into the world to experience the special exhilaration that come with leadership, you drive a car that reflects **your identity** as someone who is modern, successful, and ready for anything - **an Isuzu Trooper**." (emphases added) ⁴⁷*

-To the seemingly endless and meaningless collective suffering of nameless, faceless and powerless drivers in Bangkok's world-notorious suffocating traffic jams, Volvo offers itself as a symbolic difference and relief:

"Outside the Volvo it's hot, noisy and polluted. Inside the Volvo it's cool, very quiet and very, very comfortable. The Volvo Executive is an island of luxury and tranquility in a sea of impatience and discomfort. Of course, everyone knows that Bangkok's traffic is getting worse by the month. And even a Volvo, with its deep leather seats, auto air-conditioning, CD player and stretch-out legroom, cannot make the traffic jams any shorter. But they certainly seem shorter. Thank goodness, I'm in a Volvo." ⁴⁸

-And last but not least, the same message is said in not so many words by this advertisement, which offers a special credit card membership to prospective or actual owners of a luxurious car:

"You know who I am."

Tell them who you are with the Mercedes Card." 49

No longer a Thai, a Thai-Thai, or even an un-Thai, but simply a Mercedes person.

3) Conclusion

Postmodern Thainess

The cultural political phenomena I have tried to present in this research paper may be characterized, to borrow and expand on Marx's celebrated dictum in his and Engels' Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), as solid Thainess melting into air and then resolidifying again into signs. That is of course a seductive metaphor. One can also render it in cultural studies parlance as national identities and the consumption and reproduction of identity commodities in the age of cultural globalization.

They have to do with the ongoing transformation of "Thainess" as a result of two causes, namely :

- 1) the ineluctable and undeniable process of economic and cultural globalization and
- 2) the attempt of the Thai state to hold on to its erstwhile cultural political hegemony over the signification and communication of "Thainess" amidst the worldwide, state-bypassing and cross-national flows of commodities and images.

Under the pretext of "the preservation of Thainess", the state has tried to preserve and insist on its official nationalist authority over the increasingly independent and globalized Thai society and culture. Hence, the "Year to Campaign for Thai Culture" project which was first introduced in 1994 and has later been extended until 1997.

I am of the opinion that the total upshot of this project, instead of helping to preserve or freeze "Thainess" as the state originally intended, has led to the further meltdown of the signifieds of Thainess. Of course, since the beginning of the project, there have been a plethora of widespread, eager and energetic responses to the official campaign from the private and popular sectors and "Thainess" has become highly visible and widely publicized in the media and urban areas. And yet, the so-called "Thainess" has materialized in the forms of free-floating, empty and ambiguous signifiers, open to a wide range of opportunistic and situational reinterpretation and manipulation so that it comes to signify a host of "un-Thai" things, commodities and behaviour. It can thence be concluded that the game of Thainess, or the interplay

between the official ethno-ideology of Thainess and the conflicting, schizophrenic desires of the Thai public, has resulted in the fragmentation and meltdown of "Thainess" as the object of desire.

But if solid Thainess has already melted into air, how one can study such a gaseous entity ?

I would like to suggest that one can do so by seriously and critically seeing, watching, reading, scrutinizing and peeping at the signs and images of Thainess as they appear. It means that the main thing one has to grasp and focus on is not any essence of "Thainess" behind or beneath these images and signs (or the deep structure) but the superficial and mediatized images and signs themselves (or the surface structure). Not the profound, inner content of Thainess, but its surface, outer forms should be the very object of our study.

These surface, outer forms consist of commodities, signs and images which are the cultural artefacts for mass consumption prevalent in print and electronic media as well as mundane everyday life, be it advertising, songs, poems, TV & film stars, singers, commodities, brand names, posters, stimulant drinks, sterilized refreshing tissues, canned vegetarian food, moon cake, fast-food/ethnic food restaurants, sedans, etc. One has to stop looking down upon and dismissing them as mere low-class, low-taste, copycat popular culture unworthy of serious intellectual and conceptual engagement. To continue doing so is to miss and misunderstand the whole logic and dynamic of cultural change. Hence the thoughtless and heedless official campaign for Thai culture without being aware of its actual consequences.

On the contrary, one should carefully and earnestly read the cultural artefacts for mass consumption as if they were mysterious and wonderful antiques or artworks, containing hidden truths and waiting there for us to decipher, so that we may become aware of what they are doing to "Thainess".

¹ Prepared for the Asia Leadership Fellow Program 1996 in Tokyo, organized by the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center. The author would like especially to express deeply-felt gratitude to the staff members of the Program Office at I-House for taking care of him during his unfortunate illness there and for making his intellectual sojourn in Japan an impressive and memorable one.

² Supakana Popittakamol, "New Entrants Spur Ad Spending," Bangkok Post, 2 December 1994, p.21.

³ Rangsana Thanapornpan, "*Lokanuwat kab sangkhom setthakij thai* [Globalization and Thai Society and Economy]," Phoojatkan Raiwan, 30 September 1994, p.8.

⁴ Sulak Sivaraksa, "*Sassana lae watthanatham: wikritkan lae naewnom* [Religion and Culture: Crisis and Trends]," Sinlapawatthanatham, 16:1 (November 1994), 103-114.

⁵ My argument concerning consumerist culture and society in this part is derived from Zygmunt Bauman, Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), Chapter 10, 11.

⁶ Bauman, ibid., pp.167-168.

⁷ Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)," Early Writings, tr. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1981), pp.279-400.

⁸ Immanuel Wallerstein, Historical Capitalism (London: Verso, 1983), Chapter II.

⁹ Sulak, ibid., p.108.

¹⁰ Chiwit tong soo, 3:109 (24-30 December 1994), 12. Todd Thongdi is a well-known and outspoken Thai-speaking American musician, singer, writer and commentator who appears frequently on various TV talk shows in Thailand. The passage came from an interview he gave in the Concert for the Handicapped at the National Theatre on 2 December 1994.

¹¹ My notion of semiotic chaos was inspired by Nopporn Prachakul, a lecturer in the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, in his article "*Wikritkan pi 2000 thi nostradamus leum thamnai* [Crisis in the Year 2000 that Nostradamus Forgot to Predict]," Phoojatkan Raiwan, 14 February 1994, p.10.

¹² It is a long-standing and popular Thai linguistic practice to double an adjective so as to lessen the effect or intensity of its meaning. Thus, *daeng* is supposed to be redder than *daeng-daeng* which is not very red. Likewise, whereas *Thai* implies a singular, pure, genuine, authentic, original, definite, narrow and monolithic version of Thainess, *Thai-Thai* connotes a pluralistic, mixed, mutant, altered, simulated, indefinite, broad and differentiated version of the same. For example, one usually applies the adjective *Thai-Thai* to foods, drinks, tastes, dresses, atmosphere, etc., but never to nation, country, people, armed forces, government or king which remain *chat thai*, *prathes thai*, *khon thai*, *kongthap thai*, *ratthabal thai*, *phramahakasat thai*. While *Thai* suggests a clear-cut division, disparity and even opposition between Thainess and un-Thainess both in their material existence and ideal essence, *Thai-Thai* indicates internal differentiation, blurring of external borderlines and shades of Thai-Thainess. Suffice it to say that *Thai-Thai*

seems to admit a far greater and wider membership of people and things into its club than the rather exclusive Thai counterpart.

¹³ Phoojatkan Raiwan, 28 April 1994, p.22. The English version of this advertisement with basically the same message but in a more concise and less colourful rendering was published on the same day in Bangkok Post, p.2.

¹⁴ Being shown on Thai TV at the time, these two Japanese film series were especially popular among kids and youngsters.

¹⁵ Presumably, the name of a massage parlour in Bangkok at the time. Massage parlours began to sprout in Bangkok during the 1960s and quickly gained popularity and notoriety as upgraded brothels. It was then a common practice among massage parlours' proprietors to give their establishments an exotic Japanese-sounding name like *Saburi* or *Sakura* which by no means necessarily implied any Japanese ownership or connection. While its origin is unclear to me, I distinctly remember a contemporary strong sense of association between massage on the one hand and Japanese femininity on the other as if somehow it had been the Japanese females who excelled in the art of massage !? Perhaps, this might have something to do with the stereotype of a slavishly submissive Japanese wife.

¹⁶ Supposedly, a Japanese rendering of the question in the preceding line.

The name of the bohemian friend who "returned" this long-lost poem to me is Mr Suphachai Jaroensakwatthana. The newspaper article in which he found it quoted is Banyat Surakanwit, "*Khwamsamphan thai-yipun: Phaphot thi mai plianplaeng* [Thai-Japanese Relationship: The Unchanged Image]," Matichon, 2 May 1983. The poem itself was originally published in Thairath, 17 December 1972.

¹⁷ See Cassette tape jacket information, *Made in Thailand*, Carabao (Ligo, 1984. C-27106).

¹⁸ "Je n. food without fish or meat for Vietnamese or Chinese who observe a religious rite, also *Jae*. (Chinese)" (my own translation). See Photjananukrom ratchabandittayasathan pho.so. 2525 [The Royal Institute's Dictionary, B.E. 2525] (Bangkok: The Royal Institute, 1987), p.238.

¹⁹ According to Associate Professor Dr Wilaiwan Khanisthanan of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, a recent survey of the brand names of products advertised on Thai television shows that over 90 % of them are in English. See Wilaiwan Khanisthanan, "*Laksana phasa thi chai phan seumuanchon thorathas* [The Character of Language Used in TV Mass Media]," Thammasat wichakan: neuang nai wara khrob rob 60 pi haeng kansathapana mahawitthayalai thammasat [Thammasat Scholarship: On the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Founding of Thammasat University] (Bangkok: Academic and Research Affairs Department, Thammasat University, 1994), pp.219-319.

²⁰ In this regard, it is noteworthy that a favourite gimmick among Thai singers is to adopt a foreign stage name (e.g. Honey, Chen Chen) but keep the surname in Thai or local dialects (e.g. Sri-isan, Bunsungnoen, both of which are distinctly Laotian).

²¹ See in this regard Akira Suehiro, "Capitalist Development in Postwar Thailand: Commercial Bankers, Industrial Elite, and Agribusiness Groups," in Ruth McVey, ed., Southeast Asian Capitalists (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1992).

²² "*Meua fast seafood baeb thai thai ja soo ham-kai sanchat nok* [When Thai-Thai Fast-Seafood Is Going To Fight Ham-Chicken of Foreign Nationality]," Phoojadkan Raiwan, 1 November 1994, pp.29-30.

²³ Quoted in John Naisbitt, Global Paradox: The Bigger the World Economy, the More Powerful Its Smallest Players (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1994), p.19.

²⁴ I owe this fruitful insight to Donald M. Lowe's perceptive analysis of the workings of the late-capitalist commodity in his "Postmodernity and Postcoloniality," Positions, I:1 (Spring 1993), 280-285.

²⁵ Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen, Imagologies: Media Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1994), p. Simcult 4-5.

²⁶ "*Ann khan rab fashion hit, anurak-buach chipfram* [Ann Responds to Fashionable Hit, Preserve (Thainess)-Take Vows as Brahmin Nun]," Thairath, 30 December 1993, p.21.

²⁷ "*Khita yib chin pla mun khwa billy* [The Khita Company Catches a Big Fish, Getting Billy]," Thairath, 15 December 1993, p.21.

²⁸ "*Maghavalentine kob-tui sweet sangob khao wad tham bun-nunghom khao* [On Magha-Valentine's Day Kob and Tui Sweetly and Calmly Go to the Temple to Make Merit and Wear a White Dress]," Thairath, 14 February 1995, p.14. A not so subtle insinuation of lesbianism in their relationship by the Thairath reporter is distastefully evident.

²⁹ Emphatically not "internalization" for reasons that will soon become apparent.

³⁰ A superb telepathic allegory of this spiritualization of Thainess emerged on another similar occasion, namely a TV & radio spot contest on the theme of the Year to Campaign for Thai Culture, jointly organized by Office of the National Culture Commission (a government agency under the Ministry of Education) and Robinson Department Store. The top award in the radio spot category was won by a team of five students from Chulalongkorn University whose entry was entitled "*Mun khleun phid*" (or "Wrong Tuning"). They explained the concept behind their work as follows:

"Suppose a kid turns on a radio, tries tuning in to every possible program and then finds only Thai classical music...That is wellnigh impossible. But if we tune our mind, that is our feelings

and spirit, then we can receive Thai classical music and love Thai classical music. We can be tuned in together and don't have to depend on other things around us including mass media." (my own translation)

See "*Seu spot thorathas lae witthayu: sing sathon watthanatham no. so. thai* [TV & Radio Spots: Reflections of Thai Students' Culture]," Siam Post, 18 May 1994, p.11.

³¹ Reeya Chaicharas, "The Future Face of Thailand's Ads ?," The Sunday Magazine (Bangkok Post), 20(25 September-1 October 1994), pp.16-19; also see the front cover and contents page.

By the way, remember Mr Billy Ogan, the famous pop-singer and idol of Thai teenagers quoted earlier ? His new music album, in which he intended to mix in Thai cultural issues, has finally been released in mid-1994. Entitled "*Billy banleulok*" in Thai and "Billy World Class" in English, the album features a lead song with the title "*Sawaddi rap yo*" (or "Good Day Rap, Yo"), the most "Thai-Thai" song in the album, whose lyrics were written by a Mr Bunliang Angkaew and reads partly as follows:

"If you want to rap dance, let's do it but don't forget to preserve Thai-Thai things. Associate with Westerners but don't forget that you are Thais..." (my own translation)

See Cassette tape jacket information, *Billy World Class*, Billy Ogan (Onpa, 1994. 90-002).

³² Quoted in Reeya, "The Future Face of Thailand's Ads ?," p.18.

³³ Quoted in Reeya, "The Future Face of Thailand's Ads ?," p.19.

³⁴ The survey was conducted by Integrated Partners, a private company, among 1,200 people throughout the country from 1 to 19 November 1993. As it turned out that the overall public perception of the Ministry was strongly negative, the Ministry typically decided to suppress the findings for fear that its reputation would be further tarnished. See "Opinion Poll without Results," Bangkok Post, 9 June 1994, p.1; and "*Poey phol wijai mahadthai, kromthidin-to.ro. huai sud* [Opinion Poll on Interior Ministry Revealed, Lands & Police Depts. Are the Worst]," Matichon Raiwan, 9 June 1994, p.1, 13.

³⁵ "*Batkredit boom sudkhid, bank chi mai deung ngoenfoe* [Credit Cards Are Booming but Not Causing Inflation, Bank Says]," Phoojadkan Raiwan, 18 July 1994, p.1, 2; and "Firms Still Rushing into Thai Credit Card Market," Bangkok Post, 15 February 1995, p.19.

³⁶ "*Nithassakan "thai nimit" pluk khwam pen thai hai kheun chip* [The "Thai Nimit" Exhibition: The Revival of Thainess]," Phoojadkan Raiwan, 22 February 1994, p.10.

³⁷ See the reports on the advertising and marketing campaign of Bunrod Brewery Company, the producer of Singha Beer in Phoojadkan Raiwan, 9 December 1993, p.25, 26; and especially the perceptive, tempting and intoxicating comparative analysis of the advertising strategies of Singha Beer vs Carlsberg Beer by Issara Choosri in "*Lokanuwat nai kaew beer* [Globalization in a Glass of Beer]," Phoojadkan Raiwan, 17 August 1993, p.35.

It should be pointed out in this regard that Thais are well aware of the un-Thainess of beer as an alcoholic drink originally brought in from the West. There is not even a Thai coinage for the word "beer", only a foreign-sounding transliteration. It is in this cultural context that Singha Beer chooses to present itself to the public as the pioneer in beer-brewing in Thailand and therefore a proud sign of Thainess.

³⁸ A TV advertising spot released in 1993 made the point that among the variety of insurance companies, Thai Life Insurance was chosen "well, because I am after all a Thai", so said the male character in the ad to his wife. And yet, this Thai life insurance company had been founded in the 1940s by such Chinese business tycoons as Lo Tek Chuan Bulasuk, Tan Chin Ken Wanglee, etc. See Kasian Tejapira, "*Jomphol plaek: phoonam ratthaniyom thai* [Field Marshal Plaek: Thai Statist Leader]," Sinlapawatthanatham, 15:3 (January 1994), 56-59.

³⁹ Launched on 6 July 1994 by the top executives of Central Department Store themselves, all dressed up in traditional Thai style, the campaign was said to be partly an adaptive management reform in the wake of the liberalization of Thai retail businesses as a result of GATT and AFTA, and partly a participative response to the government's Year to Campaign for Thai Culture. Needless to say, the Chirathiwat family, which owns this biggest chain of department stores in Thailand, is originally Hainanese of the Zheng clan. Also, this Thai-Thai store has adopted an English name since its founding. Of course, their Thai Store campaign has become rather problematic in the present context of global capitals and multinational (Thai & un-Thai) business alliances in Thailand. See Phoemphol Phophoemhem, "*Khvam pen thai khong central* [Central's Thainess]," Phoojadkan Raiwan, 8 July 1994, p.29, 30.

⁴⁰ "*Daewoo khai khvam pen europe* [Daewoo Sells Europeanness]," Phoojadkan Raiwan, 28 January 1994, p.36.

⁴¹ "*Coca Moon Cake*," Radio broadcast, MCOT-FM 96 MHz., September 4, 1994.

⁴² "English tea, Lipton Tea, a higher level of serenity," so says the ad at the end. "*Cha lipton, ik khan khong khvam sukhum* [Lipton Tea, a Higher Level of Serenity]," MCOT (TV Channel 9), Bangkok, September 4, 1994.

⁴³ A close replica of the original advertisement in Bangkok Post, 8 June 1994, p.27.

⁴⁴ "*Rao nen kanphalit baeb dangdoem kab khanom wai phrajan khong rao* [We Stress the Traditional Method in Producing Our Moon Cakes]," Interview of Ms Patchari Kesornthammakittiwut, manager of Shang Palace Restaurant, Shangrila Hotel, Phoojadkan Raiwan, 29 August 1994, p.29, 30. And Kasian Tejapira, "*Thassana sueksa watthanatham ton pai thiew hua qiao* [Cultural Study Tour: Visiting Hua Qiao]," Phoojadkan Raiwan, 26 September 1994, p.8.

⁴⁵or of the worshipper. I distinctly remember two occasions when I found this to be the case. The first one happened in 1993 when I visited the famous Mangkorn kamalawas or Leng Nei Yi Chinese Buddhist temple in the Chinatown area of Bangkok during the *kin je* festival. I

overheard, while viewing a religious exhibition, a Chinese Buddhist monk explaining to two Chinese women in white *kin je* dress that originally the *Kuan Yin* Goddess in Chinese Buddhist popular mythology had been an ethnic "Indian" but was later Sinicized by the Chinese. One of the women looked perplexed and asked impatiently: "Well then, is she actually Indian or Chinese after all?" To whom the monk replied: "What she is depends on the faith of the worshipper. It's the same thing with a Buddha image. The Chinese make it look Chinese while the Indians make it look Indian..."

Four years before that, I had a lengthy argument with a group of Thai students in Cornell on a similar topic i.e. the nationality/ethnicity of Jesus Christ. I suggested to them the possibility of a Jesus Christ turning black perhaps after being Africanized by some negroid worshippers in Africa, to which they flatly denied. Alas, it's a pity that at the time I hadn't yet read page 10 of Carlos Fuentes' stupendous Terra Nostra.

⁴⁶ Issara Choosri, "*Lokanuwat nai kaew beer* [Globalization in a Glass of Beer]," Phoojadkan Raiwan, 17 August 1993, p.35.

⁴⁷ Bangkok Post, 26 July 1994, p.15.

⁴⁸ One may as well say: "Thank goodness, I'm a Volvo." Bangkok Post Economic Review, Mid-Year 1994, 30 June 1994, p.5.

⁴⁹ Bangkok Post, 15 August 1994, p.13.

Intellectuals in Southeast Asia: An Inquiry Into the Social Construction of Their Roles

(Discussion paper prepared on October 28, 1996)

Ignas Kleden

1. The Idea

The role of intellectuals in Southeast Asian countries seems to always oscillate between that which is played by the traditional literati on the one hand and that which is assumed by the new intelligentsia on the other. As literati they are supposed to conserve the cultural, intellectual and philosophical legacy of their country, whereas as intelligentsia they are expected to explore new possibilities and new patterns of social and political interaction as well as new ways of looking at things. As literati they are assumed to localize the cultural legacy of all kinds in their local context, or to bring the great tradition and erudition of the world into the little tradition of their context, whereas as intelligentsia they are expected to incorporate the particularities of their little tradition or their local context into a broader context of world cultures and general learning.

The role of intelligentsia is discernible most clearly in the role the intellectuals of Southeast Asian countries played during the national awakening which led finally to the emergence of new nations and the subsequent new states in this region after the Second World War. The ideas of freedom, human dignity and many other things which had to do with basic human rights were brought into the countries by the intellectuals, these in turn becoming one of the driving forces which pushed for the new venture among the then-colonized peoples.

The second stage faced by the intellectuals of these countries is characterized by their involvement in the planning and implementation of economic development. The once rather general role of producing ideas pertaining to society, state, culture and history, turns out to be superseded by a more technical, expertise-based and professionally oriented role, which is needed for economic development. The technical side of the intellectual role in economic affairs, however, is accompanied by another process, in which the role of intelligentsia tends to fall back to the old-established traditional role of literati. This is the case because economic planning is not always compatible with the unpredictable socio-political changes which might result from the exploring ventures of the intelligentsia. *Ceteris paribus* (other things being equal) seems to become a tenet on which to postulate economic theories, but also a precondition for embarking upon economic development.

The third stage is marked by the attempt of intellectuals to deal with the strengthening of the state made possible and necessary after the emergence of the nation-state, as well as with the strengthening of market forces made possible by economic development. The new, critical responses to both state and market are owing to the fact that the state, which was initially believed to be a realization of national sovereignty, is not always in a position to stand for the development of a

democratic society (which was initially one of the leading ideas which pushed for national awakening), while market forces turn out to be unable to deal with questions relating to equality and justice, the improvement of quality of life and environment, and the availability and the creation of more equal opportunity for the citizens. In other words, the process in which the state is disembedded from the society, and the economy is disembedded from both state and society, brings a backlash which is not necessarily beneficial to the making and the development of so-called civil society.

2 . Some Problems

The relationship between intellectuals and their societies is basically a dialectical one. While they are impinging upon their societies through their ideas and their actions, they are at the same time subject and susceptible to the impact of social changes taking place in their societies. The social changes in Southeast Asian countries in the last decade, for instance, have exerted an obvious influence on the self-understanding of intellectuals and the role they are forced to play, as well as the problems with which they are expected to deal. The changes listed below should serve as a starting point for a discussion of the state of affairs of Southeast Asian intellectuals with reference to the historical background described in above.

2.1. A shift is evident from intellectual as a status-group to intellectual as a function and role. For the time being, it seems to me, it is more pertinent to speak of the intellectual role of various institutions and groups rather than of a group called intellectuals. In that sense, the contribution of intellectuals proper might not be as spectacular as expected, since this role is being taken over by other institutions and organizations such as media (print and electronic), academe, professionals, NGOs or the advocates of people' s movements.

2.2. The old-established tension between literati and intelligentsia is now taking a new shape with a powerful economic underpinning. The traditional tension between the conservation of the cultural legacy and the exploration of new possibilities is transposed into a new tension between, on the one hand, the attempt to articulate problems and concerns arising from within the country and to speak for them on the international level and, on the other hand, the role played by the so-called *compradores* who assume the role of middlemen mediating between the national interest and the outside interest of multinational capital.

2.3. With regard to internal politics, the traditional role of literati is now transposed into a function to justify and to legitimize the powers-that-be both academically and politically. This is done by referring to theoretical arguments which can support political priorities set in certain policies, as well as by emphasizing the political relevance and significance of those priorities and the need for power to get them done. On the other hand, the role of intelligentsia is taking the form of social criticism, which intentionally or unwittingly brings a delegitimizing effect on the

existing political system. This is done both by speaking and standing for the common good and by questioning the inevitability of "necessary" evils.

2.4. In a more limited context and under certain circumstances, the conflict between the role of literati and that of intelligentsia could take place within the academe, whereby academically based intellectuals come to a parting of the way with public intellectuals. The former are supposed to conserve the scientific legacy and intellectual heritage handed down through higher learning, whereas the latter are more inclined to deal with living issues originating in Realpolitik or in the changing conditions of society. The former are more oriented towards the *production* of knowledge, the latter towards the *political use* of knowledge. The former attempt to translate practical problems into theoretical research questions, while the latter go the other way by providing theoretical apparatuses with political and economic relevance. In their relation to society, the academic intellectuals look at their society as the subject of their research and study, while the public intellectuals regard their society as the subject of their advocacy. The production of empirical and theoretical knowledge by the academics find its counterpart in the production of new solidarity attempted by public intellectuals.

3. Project proposal

Keeping the above historical background in mind and considering the new problems facing Southeast Asian intellectuals in the present context, some measures can and should be taken in order to deal with both the theoretical and practical challenges which threaten to put the existence and the functioning of intellectuals into question. There are at least three related projects which can be attempted in this connection.

3.1. A regionally organized survey to be conducted both *by* Southeast Asian intellectuals and *on* Southeast Asian intellectuals. The aim of this research is to figure out whether or not there are commonalities which all intellectuals in this region might share, and whether or not there are particularities and specific peculiarities which make the challenges facing the existence and the role of intellectuals in one place different from those in another. This survey will entail the identification of the contribution of intellectuals to their own understanding as well as the contribution provided by the changing general understanding of what intellectuals should be like. This survey can be regarded as the intellectual and academic part of the project on intellectuals in Southeast Asia.

The survey encompasses the following items:

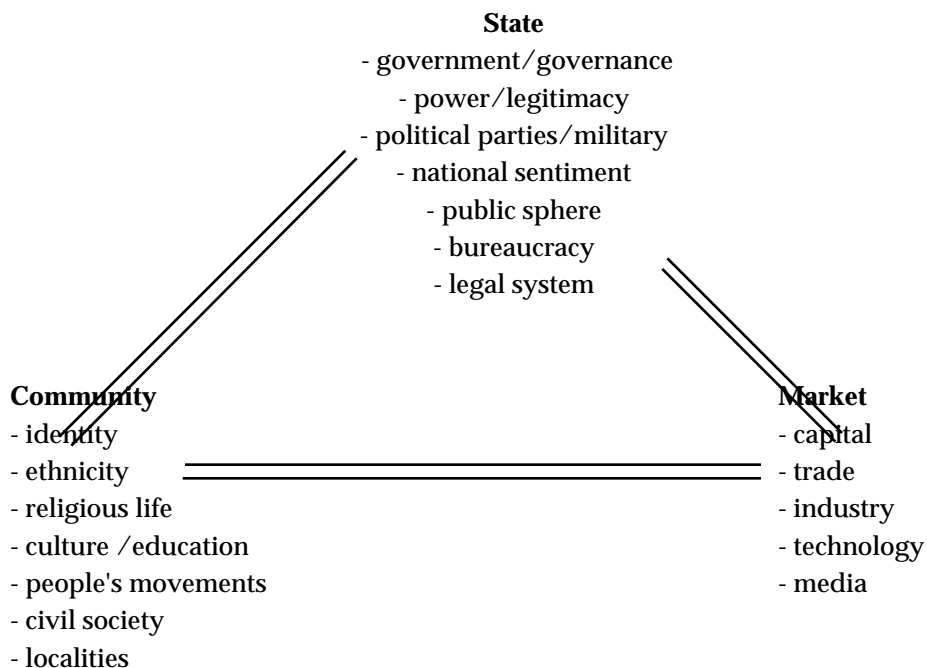
- intellectual history
- intellectual tradition in the respective countries
- intellectual community
- intellectual politics
- interlinks among intellectuals
- problems and challenges facing intellectuals
- typology of intellectuals

2. To set up a network among Southeast Asian intellectuals, which can function as a rallying point for Southeast Asian intellectuals as well as a meeting point between them and their counterpart in other regions. This network is expected to enhance communication and cooperation among Southeast Asian intellectuals, and is expected to take actions if the existence and the role of intellectuals should be jeopardized. This is done by means of:

- a statement of solidarity and concern about fellow intellectuals who are under political pressures;
- securing and enhancing freedom of expression by organizing alternative ways of publication of censored intellectual works. In this way, for example, the works of Indonesian intellectuals banned in that country could be published in the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand or Japan.

3. To set up a Southeast Asian magazine which can bring together academic work as well as intellectual work. This magazine or journal is expected to become a forum for discussion among Southeast Asian intellectuals as well as between them and their counterparts in other regions, in which the intellectual products in the respective countries can be published, commented upon and challenged.

The sociological context of Southeast Asian intellectuals can be shown in the following diagram:



Intellectual Concerns in Contemporary Asia: Crisis and Confluence

(with special emphasis on intellectual life in Southeast Asia and Japan)
(Discussion paper prepared on October 28, 1996)

Kwok Kian-Woon

1. Intellectuals at century' s end

Perhaps intellectuals shouldn' t spend too much time talking about intellectuals. Yet there are moments when intellectuals must pause to clarify and analyze the intellectual situation of their own societies and in relation to the contemporary state of the world. And they do so in a spirit of self-reflection and self-criticism rather than self-importance and self-indulgence. By virtue of their education and work, intellectuals comprise a particular sector of any society, usually as members of the middle and upper class. But their status and relatively privileged position must be qualified. On the one hand, the education of intellectuals inculcates in them a sense of vocation which transcends careerism, a sense of their wider contribution which transcends narrow specialization. On the other hand, people do look up to intellectuals as men and women who can help to throw light on the contemporary situation and to bring about social betterment. Historically, intellectuals constitute a socially significant stratum, if not one of the leading strata, in a society.

Yet the present era challenges certain basic assumptions about intellectuals. And intellectuals themselves are among the first to experience the need to clarify their own vocation and role, especially in relation to the political and economic conditions in each society. Different societies and different historical moments make available varying degrees and various kinds of freedom and unfreedom. How do intellectuals make use of the relative freedom that they have or do not have? What is the range of ways in which intellectuals stand in relation to political and economic power? Where do they place themselves in relation to the cultural and religious traditions of their people and the modern forms of thought and practice that are made available by their education? If intellectuals have no self-identity as intellectuals, how can they play meaningful roles in society? If intellectuals lose their sense of direction, what confidence can the public have in them? Indeed, is it the case that intellectuals are prevented from playing their role or that they do not have a highly developed sense of their role (or both)?

The time has come for a new generation of intellectuals in Asia to engage in a collective self-clarification on these questions.

2. The rise of the Asia region: renaissance and crisis

With the economic rise of Asian countries and the increasing economic interdependence within the region, we need to cultivate a deeper understanding of the cultural and intellectual dimensions of "Asia" or the "Asia-Pacific" as a region.

For it will not do to speak so glibly and superficially about "Asian values" or even an "Asian renaissance." Such concepts proclaim the arrival of a new and glorious "Asia" but gloss over the more fundamental human problems in each country. Indeed, there are two sides to the new Asia in the making. On the one hand, there is the economic growth and technological advancement of the region. Given the experience of poverty and backwardness in the history of the region, the significance of these aspects of development should not be denied or taken for granted. On the other hand, it is possible to argue that there is a crisis of modernity whose full dimensions are not generally understood. In many cases, capitalist development has been spearheaded by strong states which place economic growth and political stability as necessary priorities at the expense of social equity and political participation. But the crisis also has cultural, intellectual and spiritual dimensions that have to do with the breakdown of the traditional "universes of meaning" and the reception or rejection of new modes of thinking and doing under advanced globalization.

3. Toward a typology of intellectuals and intellectual roles

What are the intellectual responses to the human possibilities made available by modernization and the crisis of modernity? Perhaps it would be useful to have a clarification of "ideal types" of intellectuals and intellectual roles. At the most fundamental, we can identify three types of intellectuals, which may overlap in reality:

A) *Traditionalist intellectuals*. Such intellectuals, usually germinating from within the religious sphere, are the guardians of tradition and the purveyors of cultural wisdom. Almost by definition they play a conservative role in the sense of "conserving" traditional forms of knowledge, but this also involves grappling with the forces of modernity. This group can either support or criticize political power, depending on whether the latter is seen to be promoting its interests. For this reason, too, political authorities are keen to win approval from this group and endow policies with the aura of traditional moral authority.

B) *Technocratic intellectuals*. These make up the new class of professionals who lend their expertise to the tasks of modernization, especially in the fields of bureaucratic administration and technological advancement. This is the group that is most cultivated and coopted by political and economic power in the service of modernization, often playing the role of legitimizers of the new order.

C) *Public intellectuals*. This group comes into existence with the growth of the middle classes and the emergence of the public sphere, a space for public discourse that is not dominated by the traditionalist and the technocratic intellectuals. Although public intellectuals may be sympathetic to and supportive of the concerns and goals of the other two groups, they exercise an independent stance in responding critically to the actions and policies of both groups. In a sense the public intellectuals resemble

the traditionalist intellectuals and also play a cultural role, but they do so without being confined by the boundaries of traditionalist, especially religious, discourse. By their "secular" status, which does not necessarily mean that they have no spiritual concerns, they are able to be open to groups from different religious backgrounds. Although they too can be coopted into the official network and play a legitimizing role, they tend to resist this in order to maintain their autonomy and play their critical role.

4. Dialogue and Confluence among Asian Intellectuals

(with special reference to Southeast Asian and Japanese intellectuals)

In each society, there is the challenge of developing an intellectual community and an intellectual tradition which connects thinking minds across generations and localities. Thus, the study of intellectual history is of great significance in identifying continuities and discontinuities over time. Indeed, the development of an intellectual community and tradition cannot be taken for granted as they can be fragmented by the forces of modernization, including the dominance of political power (the state) and economic power (the market). A weak sense of intellectual community and an underdeveloped intellectual tradition—not least because of the failure to understand and repair the discontinuities in intellectual history—can only serve to strengthen political and economic power, whose dominance is entrenched almost by default. It is important to clarify where public intellectuals stand in relation to power and in relation to other types of intellectuals.

As local intellectuals work out these issues, however, they can gain insights and draw lessons from the comparative study of intellectual life in other Asian societies. With the opportunity for direct dialogue and networking, they can cultivate not only a sense of a wider intellectual community and tradition across time and space, rooted in a deeper companionship, but also an active understanding of each other's situations. However different these situations might be, there can be points of confluence which could serve as points of departure for new ways of grappling with the human costs and negative consequences of modernization and imagining and realizing the newer positive human potentialities of modernity.

In sum, our project can be carried out at two levels:

A) A comparative study of the intellectual situation in Asian countries, with emphasis on the situation in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Japan. Such a study will focus on dimensions such as intellectual history and the role of intellectuals but it must also highlight the substantive concerns of intellectuals in relation to the concrete social and political situation in each country and in the region.

B) A strategic plan for effective networking among intellectuals in the region. The idea of an Asian intellectual journal needs to be elaborated in discussion before writing a detailed proposal: This is an exciting idea which requires a great deal of vision, commitment, planning, strategy and infrastructural support. It can be started

on a modest scale, but long-term sustainability is crucial. Its success will both depend on and encourage a deep and serious networking among Asian intellectuals, and it should also enhance intellectual discussion within each country.

Intellectual Concerns in Contemporary Southeast Asia: Crisis and Confluence

(November 29, 1996)

Arnold Azurin, Ignas Kleden, Kwok Kian-Woon, and Wan Manan

Prologue

What are the deepest concerns of intellectuals in Southeast Asia? What are the problems and challenges faced by intellectuals? What is their own understanding of their roles within the specific socio-historical conditions of their society and of the region? What is their relation to the state and the market? These are some fundamental questions to guide our discussions as we evolve our collaborative project. In the first phase of the project, we will embark on a comparative inquiry into the intellectual situation in Southeast Asia, with special focus on Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. We plan to elicit and analyse certain commonalities which Southeast Asian intellectuals share, as well as certain particularities which make the intellectual situation in one country different from that in another. In subsequent phases of the project, we hope to deepen and widen the discussion among intellectuals from other parts of Asia.

Context

Historically, intellectuals constitute a socially significant stratum in the modernization of Southeast Asian countries. Intellectuals have played the role of conserving traditional knowledge in the local setting. In the wake of modernity, however, they have also been engaged in developing newer forms of thought and newer patterns of social and political interaction. In the immediate postwar era, intellectuals contributed to the anticolonial and nationalist struggles, bringing into their countries the idea of freedom and human dignity (and other related ideas). And with national independence, they played the role of modernizer, the vanguard and legitimizers of a new social, political and economic order. At this stage, the once general role of producing ideas pertaining to society, politics, culture and history is superseded by a more technical, expertise-based and professionally oriented role, which serves the demands of economic development. But national development and the rise of the middle class also enlarges the public sphere, or civil society, as a relatively autonomous arena in which intellectuals play a critical and responsible role. Likewise, social movements emerge in response to the negative consequences of development. With the strengthening of the state and the expansion of the market under globalization, however, intellectuals face new challenges in conceptualizing and articulating ideas and participating in the work of societal transformation. The time has come for a new generation of intellectuals in Southeast Asia to engage in a collective clarification about their role and situation.

A Preliminary Theoretical Framework

Non-intellectuals do not exist because intellectual activity is an intrinsic part of human life. But the term "intellectual" presupposes a role or function that not every person plays in society. Intellectuals play such a role in a manner and to an extent that other members of the society do not.

I. An "empirical" definition of intellectual activity

As a minimal definition of intellectual activity, we propose the following three interrelated elements:

A) Conceptualization. Intellectuals are consciously engaged in the work of conserving existing forms of knowledge, whether it be historical, moral, philosophical or theoretical knowledge, and which is often developed within certain disciplines. At the same time, they grapple with the challenges to such forms of knowledge and attempt to construct and crystallize new conceptions of the world and new modes of thought and action in response to a changing environment.

B) Articulation. Intellectuals do not just conceptualize the changing needs of society and arrive at new paradigms; they also articulate their conception of the world and modes of thought in relation to people in their own society, to other intellectuals, to the state, and also to the intellectual world beyond national boundaries.

C) Participation. Conceptualization and articulation would be both impossible and meaningless if intellectuals were not already involved in a definite, concrete social and historical context in the production and use of knowledge. There is no strict dichotomy between the production of theoretical and empirical knowledge and the use of such knowledge in working toward social change, although different intellectuals might place an emphasis on one or the other.

II. A "normative" definition of intellectual vocation

In addition to the above analysis, it is also pertinent to add another layer to the discussion by suggesting a normative dimension to the work of intellectuals. This comes through, for example, in Sulak Sivaraksa's definition of intellectuals as:

... people who provide for their society—be it the world or the nation state—the most articulate, persuasive, precise, and perhaps accurate definition of the society from their experience. They also have a serious commitment to improve that society. Often, they are major living writers, educators, technocrats, members of parliament, and intellectual leaders of their religious institutions. They dare to write and speak openly and against current public opinion, especially against the policy and administration of the ruling elites. Scholars and academics and journalists who do not perform such function cannot claim to be intellectuals.

In other words, there is on the part of intellectuals a normative commitment toward social betterment. There are many things to be said about intellectual conscience and responsibility. But we suggest that the intellectual vocation is to strive against human deprivation of all kinds, including poverty, discrimination, injustice, violence, and repression.

III. A working typology of intellectuals and intellectual spheres

Intellectuals can be categorized according to different dimensions. We propose the following three ideal types, which are in reality not mutually exclusive:

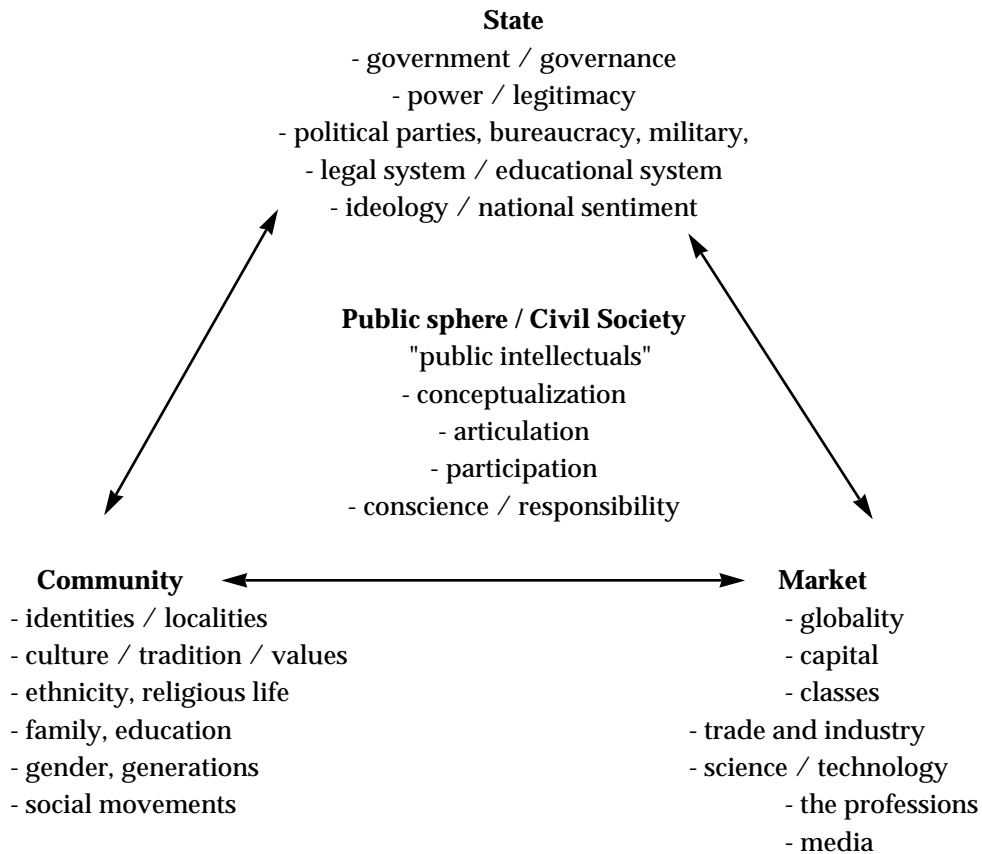
A) Technocratic intellectuals. These make up the new class of professionals, who lend their expertise to the tasks of modernization, especially in the fields of bureaucratic administration, economic planning and technological advancement. This is the group that is most cultivated and coopted by political and economic power in the service of modernization, often playing the role of legitimizers of the new order.

B) Apolitical intellectuals. These are working in the fields of the humanities and the sciences or are professionals. They are specialists who make their contribution by conserving and developing knowledge or serving in the application of such knowledge. However, they do not consciously participate in any specific social agenda to promote change and to work towards social betterment.

C) Public intellectuals. This group comes into existence with the emergence of the public sphere or civil society as a relatively autonomous arena of public—intellectual and political—discourse. They exercise an independent stance in responding critically to the actions and policies of the state as well as the workings of the market. They can be rooted in specific (e.g. religious) communities or be part of non-governmental organizations and social movements.

IV. A schema of the sociological context of intellectual work

The following diagram highlights some of the key interrelated concerns of intellectuals and their role in the public sphere or civil society in relation to community, the state, and the market:



Project Outcomes

A) A comparative study of the intellectual situation in Southeast Asian societies, focusing on issues related to intellectual history, tradition, community, and politics and relations vis-à-vis the state and the market. The work is to be carried out in several steps.

1. Initial findings to be presented and discussed among Southeast Asian and Japanese scholars at the Weekend Retreat in Shimoda (November 24-26, 1996).
2. Further reflections to be presented at the Public Symposium at the International House of Japan (on November 29, 1996).
3. The work will be initially published in a monograph after the Public Symposium.
4. A book-length edited work will be published a year later.

B) In the meanwhile, we will continue the dialogue in the next phase of the project, also in relation to the International House of Japan, which will expand the Asia Leadership Fellow Program to a wider group of Asian countries.

Intellectuals and "Track III" Cooperation in Southeast Asia (November 29, 1996)

Arnold Azurin, Ignas Kleden, Kwok Kian-Woon, and Wan Manan

1. Introduction

The need for intellectual cooperation and exchange has become more urgent in recent years owing to numerous new problems emanating from the globalizing process. Such concerns include the responses of local communities to the global threat from the internationalization of capital, labor and market forces, and formulating new modes of social and political interaction. This will give rise to new problems brought about by the loss of the traditional set of meanings and the attempt to orient oneself anew in the changing world.

In brief, the whole transformation, which is still unfolding necessitates a new way of looking at the world, a new approach to posing questions, and creative means of figuring out possible answers. In this respect, intellectuals, whether they like it or not, are faced with new challenges which they will have to ponder fully. Apart from having to render intelligible the globalization process, they also need to syncretize new aspirations for their community by articulating them, *pari passu*, getting their communities actively involved in the effort to come to terms with the ongoing transformation.

2. New Needs

Needless to say, in order to take advantage of the rapid transformation and to surmount its negative effects, individual effort alone will not be sufficient. However, mutual cooperation and exchange are old *modi operandi* which are now taking on new relevance and significance. Responses to the ongoing globalization are discernible in various attempts to foster and enhance regional cooperation via government-to-government cooperation (Track I) and also through economic cooperation in general and trade in particular (Track II). In addition to the above types of cooperation, we believe that other strategies should be established, which could lead to Track III cooperation, namely, people-to-people cooperation. This is due not only to the limitations of Track I and Track II, but also because there are many aspects of human relations and mutual understanding which can be better developed outside the framework of state politics or of the market economy.

One type of community-to-community or people-to-people relation can take the form of intellectual cooperation and intellectual exchange, both among Southeast Asian intellectuals as well as between Southeast Asian intellectuals and their counterparts in other regions.

3. Objectives

The general objective of this project is to promote intellectual cooperation and exchange which pertain to the academic sphere of intellectual work as well as to the political sphere of the state and the cultural domain of their society and

community. Specific aims are as follows:

1. Considering the fact that many Southeast Asian intellectuals and academics are more acquainted with their mentors and counterparts in developed countries than with fellow intellectuals in their own region, the very first aim of this project is *to enable and to foster networking* among Southeast Asian academics and intellectuals.
2. Once this network has been established, it can function as *a regional base for cooperation, exchange and networking* with intellectuals from other regions in Asia in general and in East Asia and South Asia in particular, the next-door neighbours of Southeast Asia.
3. Apart from the organizational and infrastructural aspect, exchange and cooperation are intended *to enable and to enhance periodical meetings, seminars, conferences, workshops and other forms of discussion* among Southeast Asian intellectuals as well as between them and their counterparts in other regions.
4. It will become a *center for information on the socio-political and socio-cultural conditions of intellectuals* in their respective countries.
5. It is expected to *undertake advocacy* for fellow intellectuals who are facing political pressure or undergoing political harassment.

3. Action Plan and Action Program

With regard to the Asia Leadership Program we are thinking of carrying out projects in the future as follows:

1. A joint publication of the Asia Leadership Fellows, which contains a more developed and finalized version of papers they have presented at the International House of Japan. The chapters of this volume will be country reports on how every fellow regards the condition of intellectual development in their own countries. It is hoped that this book will come out in October 1997 in Malaysia.
2. Conferences:
 - in Malaysia in 1997 on "Asian Values and Intellectual Discourse"
 - in Manila in 1998 on "Ethno-nationalism, Nationalism and Globalism"
3. Book projects based on wider research involving other intellectuals in Southeast Asian countries:
 - a. Intellectual history of respective countries in Southeast Asia
 - b. Intellectual advocacy in Southeast Asia
 - c. Asian values and intellectual discourse
 - d. Human rights, democracy and the political economy

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